

MEMORY OF THE WORLD REGISTER

The Deed For Endowment: Rab' I-Rashidi (Rab I-Rashidi Endowment) 13th Century manuscript

Ref N° 2006-14

PART A – ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

1 SUMMARY

Tabriz, a city some 600km northwest of the Iranian capital Tehran, was in its heyday 700 years ago, the capital of the Mongol dynasty in Iran and a regional intellectual and cultural hub under Il-Khan Mahmud Ghazan (1295-1304). Ghazan Khan's wazir, or Lord Chancellor, Khajeh Rashid al-Din Fazlollah Hamadani, was a brilliant doctor and mathematician. He was the author of the monumental Persian-language history, *Jami al-Tawarikh*,¹ and founded an academic complex known as the Rab' i-Rashidi, or Suburb of Rashid, on the outskirts of Tabriz. This contained a paper mill, library, teaching hospital, orphanage, caravanserai, textile factory, teachers' training college and seminary and attracted students and thinkers from as far away as China. The purpose of this endowment, or *waqf*, was to ensure that as many of the scientific treatises authored by Rashid al-Din or which fell into his possession, could be copied as protection against destruction.

The document for submission to the Memory of the World Register is the Deed of Endowment of the Rab' i-Rashidi, and details the justification for the complex, the management system, administration and the budget of the endowed properties, which included land in present-day Afghanistan, Asia Minor, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Iran, Iraq and Syria.

The manuscript is 382 pages long, of which the first 290 pages were written by Rashid al-Din himself, and the rest by the Governor of Tabriz, Abdullah Bin Mohammad Tabrizi and two scribes. Due to the vast scope of the endowed properties and the high value of them as well as the high status of the Rab' i-Rashidi, this manuscript is of universal significance. Moreover the institution of the *waqf*, or endowment, is a central pillar of Islamic society, and this Deed therefore provides an important record of political and economic administration in Central Asia at a time of great dynamism and change.²

Historical records show that five copies of the original manuscript were made under the supervision of Rashid al-Din. Four were destroyed or were used to improve the current manuscript, which is therefore the only extant copy of the Deed. The manuscript was kept in the private house of the Serajmir family in Tabriz until 1969, when the Iranian National Heritage Society bought it and the Society of National Honors, Iran, recognized and registered this manuscript as national heritage in 1975.

The significance and high status of the manuscript can be seen by the gorgeous and costly materials used in its execution. Tabriz under the Ilkhanids became a centre of book production and manuscript illustration and this important document was treated with appropriate care.³ The cover page is elaborately designed with gilded calligraphy. Its provenance has been confirmed by Islamic scholars throughout the centuries, including Hassan bin Sadid-Aldin (Allameh Helli) in the 14th Century.

¹ A History of the World, Paul Lunde and Rosalind Mazzawi, Saudi Aramco World, <http://www.saudiaramcoworld.com/issue/198101/a.history.of.the.world.htm>

² The Provision of Public Goods under Islamic Law: Origins, Impact, and Limitations of the Waqf System Timur Kuran, *Law & Society Review*, Vol. 35, No. 4 (2001), pp. 841-898

³ The Development of the Illustrated Book in Iran, Sheila S. Blair, *Muqarnas*, Vol. 10, Essays in Honor of Oleg Grabar (1993), pp. 266-274

In 1971 a facsimile version of the manuscript was printed and 1000 copies published for scholarly reference. The original manuscript is kept sealed in the Manuscripts Section of the Central Library in Tabriz, Iran.

2 *DETAILS OF THE NOMINATOR*

2.1 Name (person or organisation)

Tabriz Central Library, Tabriz, Iran

2.2 Relationship to the documentary heritage nominated

The Library preserves the manuscript, along with other 3200 manuscripts.

2.3 Contact person (s)

Mohammad Mohammad Pour
Manager, Tabriz Central Library

2.4 Contact details (include address, phone, fax, email)

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3 *IDENTITY AND DESCRIPTION OF THE DOCUMENTARY HERITAGE*

3.1 Name and identification details of the items being nominated

The title of the manuscript, as appears at the beginning and written by the writer himself, is “Alvagfiyyehor Rashidieh be Khatteh Vaghef fi Bayan Sharayyet Omur Olvagf va Masaref” (The Deed for the Endowment of Rashidi written by the Author on the Justifications for the Endowed Properties and Expenditures). The manuscript describes the expenses, wages, personnel and property management, budgets and administration of the Rab' i-Rashidi. It also provides detailed information about calligraphy, pedagogy and contemporary social and economic conditions as well as biographical details about Rashid al-Din.

The manuscript is 382 pages long on costly *khanbaliq* (Chinese) paper. The dimensions are 36×27 cm and the titles are written in *zunjufr* (a rare red ink made of cinnabar) except on the main title page, where the title is written in molten gold. The leaf-fringed design of the covering page is also written in molten gold. An examination of the manuscript in 1969 by professors Iraj Afshar and Mojtaba Minovi revealed that 27 pages (1-9; 77-79; 84-89; 91-97 and 139) are missing.

The exact date of the manuscript is not mentioned but there are some historical clues that date it to the late 13th Century. The manuscript is cited in several subsequent manuscripts, including the following:

- Alampour, Rajabi. *East Azerbaijan Cultural Heritage & Tourism*: Tabriz, Ehsas, 2004.
- Afshar, Iraj. *A Glance at East Azerbaijan*: Tehran, Raizan, 1990.
- Carang, Abdol Ali. *Azerbaijan Historical Monuments*: Tabriz, Society of National Heritage Publication, 1973
- Dibaj, Ismael. *Azerbaijan Historical Monuments*: Tehran, 1966.
- Khazaeli, Ali. *Abstracts of the Papers presented at Congress on the Ways to Rebuild Rab' i-Rashidi*: Tabriz, Sotudeh, 2005.
- Mehdi Brooshki, Mohammad Mehdi. *A Survey of Administration of Rab' i-Rashidi*: Mashhad, Astan Godse Razavi, 1987.
- Nakhjovani, Hossein. *Four Articles*: Tabriz, 1964.
- Rahnemai Shahsavari, Naser. *Tabriz: The Old City of History*: Tabriz, 2004.
- Rajabzadeh, Hashem. *Ghazan Khan: A Life Story*: Tehran, Ahleh Galam, 2004

3.2 Description

The Mongol invasion of West Central Asia devastated existing societies. Nevertheless it also paved the way for a cultural and intellectual flowering that resonates across the centuries. When the Mongols arrived in what is now Iran, they had already been exposed to religious and cultural influences of the most diverse kinds; Shamanists, Buddhists, Muslims and Nestorian Christians; nomadic and sedentary communities; warriors and artists. This mixing of cultures and religions, the product of the geographical extension of the Mongol Empire, is reflected in the historical works that emerged across the region as the initial destruction wrought by the Mongols gave way to what has been termed, with only slight irony, the Pax Mongolica. The Mongols soon established order throughout their vast possessions and for the first time since classical times, communications between Europe and the Far East became safe and practical.

The era of Rashid al-Din was a turbulent, dynamic and important time in the history of the Mongol Dynasty and of what is now Iran. Rashid al-Din, born in 1247, came from a long line of distinguished scholars. His grandfather set a precedent for government service under the new Mongol rulers which Rashid al-Din followed and he became court physician and later Lord Chancellor. His great complex, Rab' i-Rashidi, was a place for men of learning to gather and create beautiful, lasting works of art and mathematics. It was also a place that marked the official acceptance by the Mongol rulers of the need to chronicle their own history, and the history of their empire, in Islamic terms. In 1295, when Ghazan Khan selected Rashid al-Din as his wazir and court chronicler, the Mongol leader also embraced the Islamic faith. Coins were issued bearing Islamic inscriptions, and four years later the Mongol princes formally adopted the turban, abandoning their traditional head-gear with its non-Islamic associations. This marked a decisive break with the Mongol past and the absorption of the conquering race by the dominant Islamic culture.

The Rab' i-Rashidi was one of a long line of *waqfs*, or endowments, that are central to Islamic society. *Waqf* provided security and stability and the complex was a place of elite learning and community charity. Second only to the endowments of Ghazan Khan and his brother Oljaitu, the Rab' i-Rashidi was one of the most important endowments in the Ilkhanid era. As well as providing a place of learning and charity to widows and orphans, the complex helped to revitalize the agricultural economy of the region and established the basis of the artisanal economy based on book production and illustration.

After the death of Ghazan Khan in 1304 Rashid al-Din continued to serve his brother Oljaitu and built two more suburbs, one outside the new capital of Sultaniyya, named after its builder Rashidiyya, which included a university, a hospital, a monastery, a bath complex, a bazaar and a 1000-room caravanserai; universities in Yazd, Arzanjan, and Herat and two more in Shabankareh; and hospitals in Shiraz, Basra and Hamadan. At its zenith the Endowment covered almost 90,000 hectares of agricultural land in what is now Afghanistan, Asia Minor, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Iran, Iraq and Syria, thousands of heads of livestock (horses, camels, cattle, donkeys, sheep and goats), orchards and market gardens and poultry.

In 1314, however, Oljaitu died and Rashid al-Din was left vulnerable to the intrigue and jealousy of the court. In 1318 he was executed on the trumped-up charge of having poisoned Ghazan Khan, his property was confiscated and the Rab' i-Rashidi, with its scriptorium and its precious manuscripts, was turned over to the Mongol soldiery and ransacked.

4 JUSTIFICATION FOR INCLUSION/ ASSESSMENT AGAINST CRITERIA

4.1 Authenticity

The authenticity of the manuscript has been established anecdotally and scientifically over the last 700 years. The first 25 pages of the present manuscript bear the names of the people who have confirmed the provenance of the document, the most notable of them being the renowned Islamic scholar Hassan

bin Sadid-Aldin (Allameh Helli) in the 14th Century. In 1969 Iranian Islamic scholars in Prof. Iraj Afshar, Prof. Mojtaba Minovi and Mr. Abdol Ali Carang, confirmed the authenticity of the manuscript. Their confirmation has been endorsed by experts from the Iranian Cultural Heritage and Tourism Organization and the National Documents Organization, as well as from Germany, Tajikistan, Japan, and Iran.

4.2 World significance, uniqueness and irreplaceability

This manuscript is unique and irreplaceable for the following reasons:

1. It was partially written by the Khajeh Rashid al-Din Fazlollah himself.
2. Various scholars have confirmed the authenticity of the manuscript.
3. It is unique.
4. It is a unique record of a turbulent and dynamic period in global history and records the administration and arrangement of a substantial and important *waqf*, or Islamic endowment, at a time when Islam was beginning to assert itself as a major world belief system.
5. This manuscript is a cynosure for contemporary *wafq*, and was used as the basis for other Deeds of Endowment.

4.3 Criteria of (a) time (b) place (c) people (d) subject and theme (e) form and style

Time: Khajeh Rashid al-Din was appointed as a wazir to Ghazan Khan in 1298 and was murdered in 1318. According to the manuscript and to the scholar Allameh Helli, the document was written by Rashid al-Din himself and therefore dates from the 14th Century.

Place: During the period in question Tabriz was the capital of the Ilkhanid government, the intellectual and cultural heart of the Mongol Dynasty in Iran and a world famous centre of book production and learning. Rashid al-Din's palace was between the two libraries in the Rab' i-Rashidi and this is probably where the manuscript was produced.

People: According to the existing page number setting done by Iraj Afshar and Mojtaba Minovi, the text of the manuscript starts on page 33, the title page. The text on this and the following pages to the end of Chapter 17 is written by Rashid al-Din himself. The text continues in the hand of the Governor of Tabriz, Abdullah Bin Mohammad Tabrizi and two other scribes. This manuscript survived the looting of the Rab' i-Rashidi after the death of Rashid al-Din and was kept in the house of the Serajmirs in Tabriz. It was first officially noted in the 14th Century by Allameh Helli, and in 1969, the late Mojtaba Minovi, Iraj Afshar, and Abdul Ali Carang committed undertake a critical examination of the text, which was delivered to the Central Library of Tabriz.

Content & Subject. The Rab' i-Rashidi was one of a long line of *waqfs*, or endowments, that are central to Islamic society. *Waqf* provided security and stability and the complex was a place of elite learning and community charity. Second only to the endowments of Ghazan Khan and his brother Oljaitu, the Rab' i-Rashidi was one of the most important endowments in the Ilkhanid era. As well as providing a place of learning and charity to widows and orphans, the complex helped to revitalize the agricultural economy of the region and established the basis of the artisanal economy based on book production and illustration.

During the era of Rashid al-Din, the arts of the book and calligraphy were at their zenith and the manuscript, one of the few that survived the ransacking of the Rab' i-Rashidi, can be considered one of the most important examples of monumental calligraphy. It was written on costly *khanbaliq* (Chinese) paper measuring 29×36 cm with a gilded leather cover. Unusually the lines of this manuscript are written across both pages so that two pages seem like one large page with a fold in the middle. Two forms of calligraphy, namely Nasta'liq and Solce are used in this manuscript. Nasta'liq was invented by the Persian calligrapher Mir Ali Sultan al-Tabrizi and its use was governed by strict rules. The titles

are written in *zunjufr* (a rare red ink made of cinnabar) except on the main title page, where the title is written in molten gold. The leaf-fringed design of the covering page is also written in molten gold.

4.4 Issues of rarity, integrity, threat and management

In the introduction to the facsimile version, Professors Iraj Afshar and Mojtaba Minovi identify this manuscript as unique and peerless. There were said to have been four other versions of this manuscript, all copies of this, the original one written by Rashid al-Din. Afshar and Minovi used the remaining parts of the other versions, kept by the Serajmirs, to improve and complete this version. No evidence indicates that another version of this manuscript exists.

No danger threatens the manuscript. It is kept in a sealed, air-conditioned and humidity-controlled container for ancient manuscripts in the Tabriz Central Library protected by a sophisticated alarm system. A microfilm of the manuscript has already been prepared and the facsimile versions of the work are available for researchers.

5 **LEGAL INFORMATION**

5.1 Owner of the documentary heritage (name and contact details)

Tabriz Central Library
Laleh Crossroads, Azadi Avenue, Postcode: 5178736345
Tabriz, Iran
Tel: +98 4114 435651-3
Fax: +98 4114 434856
Email: info@tcl_as.ir
Website: http://www.tcl_as.ir
<http://www.tabrizcentlib.ir>

5.2 Custodian of the documentary heritage (name and contact details, if different to owner)

The owner and the Custodian are the same.

5.3 Legal status:

(a) Category of ownership

After the death of Rashid Al-Din and the destruction of the Rab' i-Rashidi the manuscript was kept in the library of the Serajmir family in Tabriz until the Iranian National Heritage Society bought it in 1969 and delivered it to the custody of the Central Library of Tabriz.

(b) Accessibility

The facsimile of the original manuscript is freely available to researchers at the Central Library of Tabriz and other libraries in Iran. There are plans to host certain sections of the manuscript at an e-library under construction by the Central Library of Tabriz which is under construction (see 5 – 1). The original manuscript is kept as Ms. 3693 and the facsimile as Ms. 23436 in the Reference Section of the Central Library of Tabriz.

(c) Copyright status

Copyright of this manuscript belongs to the Central Library of Tabriz. However, the code for the copyright has not yet been registered by the library. This manuscript was registered as a written national document by the Iran National Heritage Society in 1975.

(d) Responsible administration

The Central Library of Tabriz is responsible for the manuscript. The Library is run by the Secretariat of the Islamic Republic of Iran Board of Trustees for the Public Libraries in Iran.

(e) Other factors

The rebuilding of Rab' i-Rashidi has become topical in recent years following the establishment and registration of the Organization to Rebuild Rab' i-Rashidi with a Board of Trustees.

6 *MANAGEMENT PLAN*

6.1 Several management plans are being executed or considered. Overall, they comprise the following:

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|---|----------------------|
| 1- Preparation of a printed version | (fulfilled) |
| 2 -Preparation of a facsimile version | (fulfilled) |
| 3- Reprinting of the facsimile version | (waiting for budget) |
| 4- Preparation of a microfilm | (fulfilled) |
| 5- Preparation of digital versions on CD | (fulfilled) |
| 6- Removing and controlling pests | (continues) |
| 7- Preparing an Index | (work in progress) |
| 8- Seminar on the Manuscript | (waiting for budget) |
| 9- Enhanced protection | (waiting for budget) |
| 10- Providing suitable protection from humidity and temperature | (fulfilled) |
| 11- Preparing a brochure on the manuscript in Persian and Farsi | (work in progress) |
| 12- Making the manuscript accessible via Library website | (work in progress) |
| 13- Repairing pages that had been wrongly treated | (work in progress) |
| 14- Preparing a musical teaser on the manuscript | (waiting for budget) |
| 15- Preparing a TV documentary | (under discussion) |
| 16- Communication strategy | (continues) |
| 17- Ensuring protection from theft and damage | (fulfilled) |

7 *CONSULTATION*

7.1. Provide details of consultation about this nomination with (a) the owner of the heritage (b) the custodian (c) your national or regional *Memory of the World* committee

As sole owner, the Central Library of Tabriz is in charge of preserving and safeguarding the manuscript. There has been written and verbal correspondence among the Library, the National Committee of Written Heritage and the National Memory of the World Committee.

PART B – SUBSIDIARY INFORMATION

8 ASSESSMENT OF RISK

8.1 Because of stringent security precautions, nothing threatens the safety of the manuscript at present. However it is always desirable to upgrade safety precautions and pest control measures.

9 ASSESSMENT OF PRESERVATION

9.1 There are 3,200 valuable handwritten manuscripts in Tabriz Central Library, the most prestigious of them being the Deed of Endowment. This national treasure is preserved against theft and humidity damage. Moreover a laboratory to detect and eliminate pests has been brought from the UK and is being established at the Library. A section for manuscript repair is also being established, and this section will offer services to people who have manuscripts in their homes.

PART C - LODGEMENT

This nomination is lodged by:

Mohammad Mohammad Pour, Manager, Tabriz Central Library.

(Signature)..... (Date)...March 10, 2006.....