



JAHĀNGOŠĀ-YE JOVAYNI

JAHĀNGOŠĀ-YE JOVAYNI, TĀRIḲ-E, the title of the history of the Mongols composed during the years 650-58/1252-60 (Qazvini's introd., pp. *fd-fh*) by the Il-khanid Persian vizier, 'Alā'-al-Din Abu'l-Moẓaffar 'Aṭā-Malek Jovayni (623-81/1226-83, q.v.). It is the first major historical work to be written in Persian in the Mongol period, and an invaluable source on the formation of the Mongol Empire and its early administration in Persia by someone who observed or participated in some of these momentous developments. According to Vladimir Minorsky (1952, p. 221), Jovayni represents the tradition of writing elaborated in the Saljuq chanceries and his mental field is the Islamic world: "He ventures into the Outer Darkness with some reluctance." Nevertheless, he provides a very immediate account of the contemporary Mongol Empire. His achievement was to record the events of the Mongol invasions from an Iranian and Islamic perspective and to come to terms with the great changes taking place in Persian government and society, within a coherent view that both celebrated past traditions and sought positive aspects of Mongol rule for the future.

Context. Jovayni, descended from a long line of officials who had served with distinction under previous regimes, entered government services (I, pp. 5-6) when hardly twenty years old, against the advice of his own father, Bahā'-al-Din Moḥammad (d. 651/1253). In 1249, he traveled with Arḡun to the Mongol court, and made a second journey between 1251 and 1253, during which time he spent over a year at Möngke (Manku) Qā'ān's capital. This gave him personal experience of the perils and possibilities associated with Mongol



service, since Arġun had been obliged, like his predecessor Kōrgüz, to defend himself from hostile factions at court, a preview of Jovayni's own fate under the Il-khanids (q.v.). Apart from his firsthand observations, it is possible that Jovayni had indirect access at Qara Qorum to the *Secret History of the Mongols*, whether completed at this time or earlier, and evidently a source for some of his information, although the similarities may simply represent a common source (Boyle, 1962, pp. 136-37; Bira, pp. 86-87). In November 1255, Jovayni entered the service of Hulāgu (Hülegü) Khan (q.v.) and accompanied him on his westward expedition. Following the capture of Baghdad in 1258, Jovayni was appointed governor of the city and former 'Abbasid lands in Mesopotamia and Khuzestan, a post he retained almost without interruption until his death in 681/1283 (Qazvini, pp. *ya-sin*, tr. Browne, pp. xix-xlvii; Jovayni, tr. Boyle's, intro., pp. xxx-xxxvii).

Jovayni started the *Tariq-e Jahāngošā-ye Jovayni* at the age of twenty-seven, while he was at Qara Qorum in 650/1252-53, at the invitation of his "faithful friends . . . whose definite command he could not refuse," his motive being to immortalise the glorious actions of the "lord of the age" (*pādšāh-e waqt*, i.e., Möngke Qā'ān; Jovayni, I, pp. 2-3, 7, tr., pp. 5, 10); that is, the work was evidently an imperial commission (cf. Bira, p. 85). In a famous passage (Jovayni, pp. I, 3-7, tr., pp. 5-10) lamenting the current state of patronage and learning, and his own neglect of his education by entering government service, he accepts the task in hand, using many rhetorical devices to excuse his own inadequacies, while drawing attention to his first-hand acquaintance with the subject. He also sets out the premise of the book, to make intelligible the change in fortune of the Muslims, punished for their sins, but showing also the benefits to Islam that could be discerned in the situation. The work thus has an explicitly didactic element in its purpose to achieve both spiritual and temporal advantage (I, 7, tr., p. 11). This message is reinforced throughout the text, not only in the repeated advocacy of harmony over discord (e.g., I, pp. 30, 143, III, pp. 66-68, tr., pp. 41, 181, 593-94), but in pointed observations about the consequences of treachery and oppression and the lessons to be learned from his narration of events (I, pp. 32, 45, 202, II, pp. 207, 263, tr., pp. 43, 60, 247, 474, 527). As noted by Claude-Claire Kappler (p. 191), by inviting "men of discernment" to understand the situation, he encourages his learned audience to read between the lines of his text, in which he juxtaposes tales of disaster with signs of hope and encouragement to maintain Iran's traditional values.

Jovayni complained of having only a few hours at night "when the caravan



halts” (*yak sâ’at-i dar forşat-e nozul*) to compose his history (I, p. 118, tr., p. 152), which must nevertheless have been completed after his appointment to the governorship of Baghdad. John Andrew Boyle, in the introduction to his translation (1958, pp. xxxviii-xxxix), notes several indications of the unrevised and unfinished nature of the work, and uncertainty as to its intended final form. Some support for this is provided by Ebn Bibi, who alludes to an unfulfilled historiographical project by Jovayni (Ebn Bibi, p. 12-13; cf. Melville, 2006, p. 140). Nevertheless, the *Tariḳ-e Jahāngošā-ye Jovayni* remains a polished and complete literary creation, evidence of the considerable erudition and sophistication of the author.

Structure and contents. The work is normally divided into three sections or volumes, covering (I) the rise and career of Čengiz Khan and his successors down to the deaths of Güyük and Čaġatāy, (II) the history of the K̄vārazmšāhs, especially Qoṭb-al-Din Moḥammad and his son Jalāl-al-Din, besides the pre-Mongol Turkish dynasties in Central Asia and the Mongol governors before the arrival Hulāgu Khan, (III) the rest of Mongol history to Hulāgu Khan’s westward expedition besides a history of Ḥasan-e Šabbāḥ (q.v.) and the Isma‘ilis (Qazvini’s introd., pp. *fā-fj*). Jovayni himself seems to have originally intended the early history of the Mongols and the history of the K̄vārazmšāhs to become the first book, and the reign of Mōngke Qā’ān, the expedition of Hulāgu to the west, and an account of the other rulers of the time the second book (III, p. 2; tr., p. 548). Either way, the overall structure of the work is clear; it would be the history of the two Mongol invasions of Iran, framing an account of the powers previously established there and their destruction. Nevertheless, the composition of the work in its details is rather loosely conceived. David Morgan (1982, p. 118) considers it to be “more of a collection of material on the Mongol invasions, and other matters, than a coherent history of them.”

The narrative develops essentially in chronological order, but not in annalistic format and only loosely by reign; it is characterized by various diversions and asides. It is to some degree held together by internal cross-referencing (e.g., I, 199, II, 45, III, 61; tr., pp. 243, 312, 590), though as noted by Boyle (1958, p. xxxviii), this serves also to highlight the unfinished nature of the work. Jovayni himself, however, does have a sense of the proper place for things, as in his account of the Uighurs, which is included in the first volume (p. 34, tr., p. 48) as appropriate, although in chronological terms it should be placed after the accession of Mōngke; he deals with other matters too as they arise, rather than



in a rigid sequential way (e.g., the popular uprising in Bukhara in 636/1238-39; Jovayni, I, pp. 85 ff., tr., pp. 109 ff.; Barthold, pp. 269-71). This gives the work a rather immediate and engaging quality, achieved also by other means (see below), though especially in the second volume Jovayni uses the technique of frequent “flashbacks,” which punctuate the flow of the narrative in a fairly logical manner, but without any bridging passages to guide the reader and clarify his chain of thought. His method leads also to repetitions and sometimes conflicting statements (II, p. 74, tr. p. 341, and II, pp. 230 ff., tr., pp. 494 ff. concerning his arch-enemy, Šaraf-al-Din K̄vārazmi, cf. II, pp. 270 ff., tr., pp. 534 ff.; see also Barthold, p. 37).

Overall, the *Tariḳ-e jahāngošā* is informed by a unifying vision of the justice and sagacity of the ruling emperor, Möngke Qāʾān, and the legitimacy of the new Ilkhanid regime established in Iran by Hulāgu Khan, expressed somewhat ironically with respect to concepts associated with pre-Islamic Iranian kingship (in frequent references to K̄osrow Anōširvān and other Iranian heroes), although also making great efforts to portray the Mongol Qāʾāns as favorable towards Islam (e.g., III, pp. 32, 60-61, 79-80, tr. pp. 569, 589, 600 and Boyle’s intro., pp. xxxiv-xxxv).

The contents of the work have been summarized by the editor, Mirzā Moḥammad Qazvini (introd., pp. *fā-ff*, tr. Browne, pp. lxi-lxiii; Browne, 1904). After a brief word on the conditions of the Mongols before Čengiz Khan, Jovayni includes an important chapter on his *yāsā*, which, like much of Jovayni’s material, gives a valuable insight into the conditions of Mongol military life and society (I, pp. 16-25, tr., pp. 23 ff.). This section has given rise to much scholarly debate (see Ayalon; Morgan, 1986; de Rachewiltz; Aigle, 2004). There follows a very brief account of the rise of Čengiz (I, pp. 25-29), his early dealings with Ong Khan, Khan of Kerāyets, and the poisoning of relations between them, which is blamed on the envious calumnies of the latter’s close associates (a familiar enough theme in Persian history). Jovayni paints a rosy and idealized picture of the harmony among the sons and descendants of Čengiz Khan, thus setting a pattern for the moral framework of the whole book.

Much of the first volume is taken up with the conquests of Čengiz Khan, preceded by the actions of Kučlok the Naiman (Nāymān), who is wrongly identified as the son of Ong Khan, and the K̄vārazmšāh against the Qara K̄etāy in removing what Jovayni saw as the mighty wall (*sadd-e bozorg*) defending Islam from the turbulent hordes of the steppe (I, pp. 52, II, pp. 80, 89, tr., pp. 70,



347, 357). Jovayni's account includes many celebrated passages on the fall of the major cities of Transoxiana and Khorasan, such as the description of Čengiz Khan mounting the pulpit (*menbar*) in the *mošallā-ye 'id* (prayer grounds used on the occasion of the *'id al-feṭr*) at Bukhara, calling himself the scourge of God (*'adāb-e Kōdā*) and explaining his conquests as God's will and a punishment for the sins of the people (p. 81, tr., p. 105), rightly viewed as one of the ways whereby Jovayni sought to make sense of the calamity that had struck the Muslim world. He narrates the complex parallel but distinct campaigns in different theaters without great loss of clarity, and his brief accounts of events in the Golden Horde (q.v.) and the Čağatāy Khanate (see [CHAGHATAYID DYNASTY](#)) that conclude the first volume bring the history of the different regions of the empire to the same point on the eve of the accession of Möngke Qā'ān. In both cases, it is also true that it would be helpful if he made it clearer what he was doing. Jovayni's juxtaposition of unconnected passages does, however, create a powerful and occasionally cathartic literary effect (see below). The first volume nevertheless ends abruptly and the author's chain of thought is not picked up later.

The second volume starts with a chronological history of the K̄vārazmšāhs in a more annalistic framework, especially following the career of the heroic Jalāl-Din K̄vārazmšāh, frequently compared with champions in the *Šāh-nāma*. There follows the history of the Mongol viceroys (pp. 218 ff; tr., pp. 482 ff.), evidently based on first hand knowledge and doubtless drawing also on the experiences of his father, Bahā'-al-Din (e.g., p. 247, tr., p. 511).

The last volume is considered by Bira (2002, p. 93) the most important part of the work, largely because Jovayni here relies almost entirely on his own observations. After the contested election of Möngke, the work continues with Hulāgu Khan's westward expedition and his attack on the Isma'ilis (pp. 89 ff.; tr., 607 ff.). This is followed, logically enough, by an account of their doctrines. The fall of the Isma'ilis is taken as evidence of the hidden significance of Čengiz Khan and his successors (*ḥaqiqat-e serr-e elāhi dar koruj-e Čengiz Kān*; pp. 138-39, tr. p. 638), yet the whole work ends with an implied threat also to his imperial patrons: "This is a warning for all who reflect . . . may God do likewise to all tyrants" (p. 278, tr., p. 725).

As frequently noted, despite being completed in 658/1260, the *Tariḵ-e jahāngošā-ye Jovayni* does not cover the fall of Baghdad that had occurred two years earlier. Jovayni contents himself with ending on the more propitious note of the destruction of the Isma'ilis (Morgan, 1997, p. xxi), but many



manuscripts contain as a supplement the account of the fall of Baghdad written by Naṣir-al-Din Ṭusi (Jovayni, III, pp. 280-92; Wickens; Boyle, 1961).

Sources. Jovayni mentions very few written sources, though there are occasional hints (I, 27, II, 44, tr., pp. 37, 312-13; cf. also Qazvini's footnote at III, pp. 355-57, tr., p. 651 n. 55). Apart from his possible familiarity with material in the *Secret History of the Mongols* (see above), he refers to one of Mōngke's *yarliḡs* as being kept in the archives (III, P. 75, tr. p. 598), implying he had access to them. At the outset of the second volume, he mentions some sources on the K̄vārazmšāhs (II, p. 1, tr., p. 277), but these cannot account for all his material. A detailed comparison with the chronicle of Ebn al-Aṭir (ca. 630/1233) and others has yet to be made. Jovayni knew Šehāb-al-Din Moḥammad Nasawī, whose history of the life of Jalāl-al-Din K̄vārazmšāh (in Arabic) was written in 639/1241-42, but it seems he did not use it, though he quotes Nasawī's *Faṭḥ-nāma* after the fall of Aqlāt (II, pp. 153, 177-80, tr. pp. 420, 445-49), which is not included in Nasawī's own book. This, as also the earlier writings of Rašid-al-Din Watwāṭ, quite extensively quoted (II, pp. 6 ff., tr., pp. 280 ff.), reveals his interest in the linguistic and stylistic models familiar to any scribe, rather than in factual information. References to the historians of the Ghaznavids, Abu'l-Faḡl Bayhaqī (II, p. 44, tr., p. 313) and Abu Naṣr Moḥammad 'Otbi (II, p. 122, tr., p. 393), who wrote well before the period covered by Jovayni, also suggest their literary relevance to his own work (see below). For the history of the Isma'īlis, he used materials found in the library at Alamut, including the celebrated "biography" of Ḥasan-e Šabbāḡ (III, pp. 186-87, 269-70, tr., pp. 666, 719; Daftary, pp. 94-95).

Jovayni must have relied heavily on oral sources, occasionally alluded to (e.g., I, pp. 28, 45, 86, 185, tr., pp. 39, 60, 110, 228), and particularly on information from his father (I, p. 134, tr., p. 170) and other relatives (II, p. 79, tr., p. 347), who in turn could draw on the experiences of their own forebears, which are frequently referred to. Mainly, however, he drew on his personal experience, which surfaces occasionally in the narrative, for instance, encounters at the court of the Chaghatayid khan Yesü on his return from the camp (*ordu*) in 1251-52 (I, pp. 231-32, tr. pp. 275-76), and on many other occasions (II, pp. 217, 225, 248-50, III, p. 101, tr., pp. 481, 489, 512-13, 615). It is his own involvement in many of the affairs he describes that lends his work its authority and value.

Place in Persian historiography. Faḡl-Allāh Ruzbehān Kōnġi (p. 91, tr. Minorsky/Woods, p. 10) puts Jovayni's history in the category of those who focus on a particular dynasty (*ferqa*), but without concentrating only on their



leader or chief (*sarvar*); Jovayni, “pride of the learned and choice of the eloquent,” covers all the affairs of the Chengizid rulers, together with the kings (*moluk*) of other groups (*ṭawā’ef*). Kōnĵi notes that Šehāb-al-Din ‘Abd-Allāh Waṣṣāf followed this lead, while a second group including Abu Naṣr ‘Otbi and Šaraf-al-Din ‘Ali Yazdi discuss the fortunes only of one great king or ruler (p. 92). On the one hand, Jovayni was certainly the model and inspiration for the work of Ebn Bibi (see above) and Waṣṣāf, who wrote a continuation of the *Jahāngošā-ye Jovayni*; it was also the source of emulation for Yazdi’s *Zafar-nāma*, supposed to be entitled *Tārīḳ-e jahāngir* (Woods, p. 101), and the *Jahāngošā-ye nāderi* of Mirzā Mahdi Khan Estrābādi/Astarābādi. On the other hand, Jovayni was also extensively drawn upon both by Bar Hebraeus (q.v.; Ayalon, 1971, p. 127; Borbone, cited by Aigle, in press) and by Rašid-al-Din Faḏl-Allāh, who supplemented his work with additional sources (Boyle, 1962; Daftary); the later author is generally fuller in his information, the earlier, Jovayni, in his “opinions” or judgments. There is still no detailed study dedicated purely to the relationships between these works. Ebn al-Ṭeqṭaqā (q.v.) also made lesser, and contentious, use of Jovayni (Boyle, 1952). As for the precursors of Jovayni, his subject matter led him to depart from previously established models of historiography, which were structured around the history of Muslim rulers (cf. Bira, p. 88); his antecedents are more in the literary realms of rhetorical prose, which acquired its definitive features in his work (Poliakova, p. 244, citing Bahār).

Style. Kōnĵi’s classification of Jovayni is accurate not only so far as his focus is concerned, but also for his style; it is no accident that the authors with whom he is bracketed share his flair for ornate literary language and the ornate style of writing (*naṭr-e monšīāna*). This is exemplified in the *Faṭḥ-nāma* penned on the fall of Alamut by the author, who here calls himself a *mostawfī* (III, pp. 114-15, tr., pp. 622-23). The text is full of wordplays, allusions and tropes appealing to highly educated readers, although as noted by Julie Meisami (1999, p. 294), such language is also a perfect vehicle for irony. In fact, he intersperses passages of panegyric and flattering personal epithets into a narrative that is otherwise artful but restrained. Jovayni’s language is vivid, and his metaphors are always colourful and fresh. Among its notable features are the descriptions of spring, which break up the narrative and also carry the promise of a fresh departure, as at the start of the account of Čengiz Khan’s return to Mongolia, and also before Ögedei’s *quriltāy* (assembly of Mongol princes) of 1235 and the accession of Güyük (I, pp. 109-10, 155, 204, tr., pp. 138, 197, 249). Some of these juxtapositions create a sense of relief from the dark



import of the events chronicled; the optimistic tone set before the accession of Ögedei, mentioned even before Čengiz Khan's death (I, pp. 141, tr., p. 178), follows the grim narrative of the devastation of Nišāpur, and the very long section of anecdotes about Ögedei (I, pp. 158-91, tr., pp. 201-36; copied by Rašid-al-Din, pp. 684-705) are entertaining as well as edifying, doing much to dispel the brutal impressions of the account of Čengiz Khan and the subsequent bloody conquest of north China.

Another feature is Jovayni's frequent quotation of the *Šāh-nāma*, in such a way as to provide a commentary on the events he describes, rather than purely for ornament in the manner of Moḥammad Rāvandi (see Meisami, 1994), who quotes entire *qašidas*. As noted by Asadullah Melikian-Chirvani (esp. pp. 70-71; Jovayni, II, pp. 136, 139, tr., pp. 406, 409), his deliberate use of Ferdowsi drives home the identification of Čengiz Khan and the Mongols with Afrāsiāb (q.v.) and the Turks, Iran's traditional enemies in the *Šāh-nāma*, and underlines the durability of Iranian civilization. He also cites many other verses, in Arabic and Persian, sometimes from memory (e.g., II, p. 79, tr., p. 346), but also perhaps drawing on Abu Maṣur Ta'ālebi's *Tatemmat al-Yatima* for many quotations (see the footnotes to Boyle's intro. to his translation, relying largely on Qazvini's notes).

Appraisal. The *Tariḫ-e jahāngošā-ye Jovayni* is a sophisticated literary work and an essential, often first-hand, account of the expansion of the Mongol Empire. The unflattering assessment by David Ayalon (1971, p. 133) is wide of the mark, and although there is no doubt that Jovayni benefited from his association with the new ruling class, as in the development of his investment at Kābušān (III, 105, tr., p. 617), he was also unsparing in his comments on the evils of the times (e.g., I, p. 198, II, pp. 260, 269, tr. pp. 243, 523, 533) and in his aim to seek potential benefits to Islam from the situation. His pro-Toluid bias (I, pp. 211, 215, III, p. 7, tr., pp. 256, 260, 552; Ayalon, 1971, pp. 151-66; Jackson) merely reflects the political realities of the time and puts him in the same position as many generations of official court chroniclers (see Melville's review of Boyle's tr.). While we may agree with E. A. Poliakova (pp. 245-47) that Jovayni's language of "canonized verbal formulae" tends to cloak concrete or naturalistic details in generalised and artificial descriptions, this has not yet reached the point at which the language itself determines the factual contents of the work. Although his manner is suggestive rather than explicit, his valuable and highly personal view of the Mongol conquests of Iran leaves little doubt about their impact on Iranian society.



Large numbers of surviving manuscripts testify to the favorable reception and wide dissemination of the work (over 50 listed by Storey, tr., pp. 760–62); at least two of these were illustrated (e.g., Paris, Supplément persan 206, with other dispersed folios in the British Museum and the Art Museum of Worcester, U.S.A), including the celebrated copy of 689/1290 in Paris, both used by Moḥammad Qazvini for his edition (see Fitzherbert, esp. pp. 69-75; Richard, pp. 41, 79).

See also [HISTORIOGRAPHY iv. MONGOL PERIOD](#).

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