



RAB'-E RAŠIDI

RAB'-E RAŠIDI (راب‌عه راشیدی), the charitable foundation (*abwāb al-berr*) established by the physician, vizier, and historian Rašid-al-Din Fażl-Allāh (ca. 1247-1318) in an eastern suburb of Tabriz (Wilber, no. 34, pp. 129-31).

Due to Rašid-al-Din's position as one of the chief ministers in the [Il-khanid](#) government, he accumulated a vast fortune, which he used to construct pious foundations in various places around the Il-khanid dominion. The largest one, Rab'-e Rašidi, was founded in Tabriz, on the north bank of the Mehrān River on the side of Mt. Sorkāb. Although almost totally destroyed, the quarter can be reconstructed from the text of its endowment deed (*waqf-nāma*) dated 1 Rabi' I 709/9 August 1309, with two appendices added a few years later (Blair, 1984; Ben Azzouna, 2014). Analysis of the endowment deed, one of the earliest known, shows that the tomb complex served four intertwining functions of inheritance, commemoration, piety, and charity, and its detailed provisions provide a unique window into daily life in early 14th-century Iran under Il-khanid rule.

Set atop a hill, the complex was surrounded by ramparts and comprised two parts: a monumental entrance leading to the main section in the back. The entrance had a two-story portal flanked by minarets and led onto a courtyard used to adjudicate the weight of bread distributed as part of the pious foundation. Four *ivāns* set around the courtyard were linked by a two-story covered arcade that was used to house distinguished visitors. Beyond lay the main section of the complex, including a hospice (*dār-al-ziāfa*), a [kānaqāh](#) for Sufi gatherings and residence, a hospital (*dār-al-šefā*), and the tomb complex



(*rawza*; see Blair, 1984, p. 78, fig. 6). These four main elements were designed to provide for all the physical and spiritual needs of both residents and visitors and were complemented by other service buildings such as a **bath** (*ḥammām*), disrobing room (*maslak*), storerooms, and fountains (Blair, 1984, pp. 70-71). The loose arrangement of parts on the top of a hillside prefigures the *külliyes* or tomb complexes built by early Ottoman rulers at Bursa in northwestern Anatolia (Blair, 1984, p. 79). The focus of the Rab'-e Rašidi was the *rawza*, which contained a courtyard with a central pool, winter and summer mosques, a library (*dār al-mašāḥef wa kotob al-ḥadīṭ*), a classroom (*bayt al-ta'lim*) for instructing orphans, and other cells and chambers, in addition to the tomb proper. The tomb was set beyond the courtyard on the qibla axis, a standard arrangement designed to take advantage of the prayers and blessing of worshippers facing Mecca and probably also to project over the city below (Blair, 1984, pp. 74-76 and fig. 5).

The tomb was the locus for round-the-clock Qur'an recitations as well as special readings on holidays. The endowment specifies the procedures to be followed on these special nights. First, the tomb was unlocked and cleaned; then, the four hanging lamps (*qandil*) were filled with sesame oil, and four large candle-stands lit. All twenty-four reciters (*ḥoffāz*) entered, read the evening prayer, and sealed the Qur'an, while the keyholder (*keliddār*, *kāzen*), sweeper (*farrāš*), and overseer's representative stood by in attendance. When the service was finished, warm sweets and thin bread were served. A painting showing the mourning for the death of **Alexander** from the Great **Mongol Šāh-nāma** (Freer Gallery of Art, 1983.3; Grabar and Blair, no. 39), probably made in the 1330s at the Rab'-e Rašidi, depicts just such a scene, with the cenotaph and coffin in the center surrounded by four candlestands and hanging lamps.

Although the endowment of the Rab'-e Rašidi provides few details about architectural construction or decoration, it enumerates the personnel attached to the foundation in great detail. The prodigious endowment of nearly 50,000 **dinars**, second in amount only to those endowments established by Il-khanid sultans, was clearly designed to keep the income in the patron's family. Half of it (23,705 dinars, 5 *dāng*, 3 *tasu*) went to the overseers (*motawalli*), Rašid-al-Din during his lifetime and after his death his sons, who took over as overseer, *mošref* (controller), and *nāzer* (assistant overseer; Blair, 1984, p. 79).

The other half of the endowment provided support for more than a hundred employees, about three-quarters of them salaried professionals (*mortazeqa*), the rest laborers (*'amala*), in addition to 220 slaves (*ḡolām*). Each employee



was assigned to one of the four main sections of the complex, and all received a monthly salary (*mošāhara*) and a daily stipend of bread weighed in *manns* (Blair, 1984, pp. 79-80). Their varied salaries (and bread rations) show their differing status. One of the most important positions was that of the tomb's keyholder and superintendent (*keliddār, kāzen*), who received a salary of 300 dinars. The 24 Qur'an reciters (*ḥāfeẓ*) were paid 50 dinars annually. The mosques were used for both prayer and instruction. Four people assisted in prayer: an imam who also delivered the *koṭba* (the sermon addressed before the prayer), a preacher (*wā'ez*), and two muezzens (*mo'adden*). There were two professors for instruction: one for traditional sciences (*tafsir* and *ḥadīth*), the other for other sciences including *oṣūl* and *feqh*. The latter, who had to be a Shafe'ite, was the more important: he received the largest salary in the complex (500 dinars) and had ten students (*faqih, tāleb-e 'elm, mota'ellem*), whereas his counterpart in traditional sciences received only 150 dinars and had only two students, one for each of the subjects he taught. The students, who were listed as professional employees, received an annual salary of 30 dinars and were replaced every five years. There was also a well-paid répétiteur (*mo'id*) who aided the students of non-traditional sciences and received 200 dinars annually (Blair, 1984, p. 80).

To the *kānaqāh* were assigned a shaikh (salary 150 dinars) and 5 sufis (30 dinars, like the students). The hospital had a doctor (*ṭabīb*), who both practiced and taught and received a high salary (330 dinars), perhaps because medicine had been Rašid-al-Din's field of profession as well; an ophthalmologist-surgeon (*kaḥḥāl, jarrāḥ*; 100 dinars); and two interns or trainee-physicians (*mota'ellem*), who, like the students, were paid only 30 dinars and replaced every five years. Many of the laborers such as the torchbearers (*maš'aladār*), sweepers (*farrāš*), doorkeepers (*bawwāb*), cooks (*maṭbaki*), and custodians (*qayyem, kādem*) were paid the same as the students (30 dinars), but received one less *mann* of daily bread. The exception was the water carriers (*saqqā*), who were paid more (50 dinars). One water carrier was assigned to each section of the Rab' (Blair, 1984, p. 80).

In contrast to the employees who received salaries and were attached to specific parts of the complex, the 220 slaves and their wives received only a bread ration and were assigned to the foundation at large. They included Turks, Qazvinis, Greeks (*rumi*), blacks (*zangi*), Georgians, Indians, Ethiopians, Slavs (*rus*), Armenians, and others. The most important among them were the twenty Turks, who are identified by name, received a higher bread ration



(three *manns*, vs. two for the others), and were assigned specific jobs such as collecting the endowment's money and property, policing (*šahṅagi*), protection of the endowment's villages, construction (*me'māri*), supervision (*sarkāri wa sarhangī*), sweeping, and doorkeeping. Of the remaining slaves, 150 were gardeners, 30 cleaned conduits (*kārīz*), and 20 did odd jobs (Blair, 1984, pp. 80-81).

Both employees and slaves received housing and food. The daily bread ration was spelled out in detail (two *manns* for most laborers, up to ten *manns* for professionals), as was the type of bread (round loaves in the style of the village of Sijān, loaves one-quarter *mann* in weight baked in an oven [*forni*], without too much salt and no barley except in times of famine). The ingredients and procedures for the rest of the food are also enumerated in detail. For breakfast, each of the 35 residents of the hospice, for example, were allotted two bowls of pottage (*āš*), which was prepared in three varieties: twenty bowlfuls of wheat and groat (*ḥalimāna*), thirty-five of pickles (*toršī*) of dried pomegranate seeds with convolvulus, sumac, vinegar or yogurt, and meat; and fifteen of pea soup with meat. Residents also received medical care, including doctor's house calls to the sick, whether residents, visitors, or workers (Blair, 1984, p. 82).

A portion of the Rab'-e Rašidi's endowment was devoted to public charity. It provided for a poorhouse (*dār-al-masākin*) in the bazaar just outside the complex, where a soup kitchen served one hundred indigents daily. Each one received a half-*mann* of bread and a bowl of pottage in an earthenware bowl (*kāsa-ye sefālin*). The bowls must have been expensive, as they were carefully counted at the end of the meal. The complex also provided accommodations for visitors, who were allowed to stay up to three days and eat in the hospice. They received the same breakfast as residents as well as a second meal at the end of the day, including another half-*mann* of bread and a bowl of whatever stew (*k̄wāreš*) that had been prepared: fruit (*fawākeh*), dairy products (*labaniyāt*), pickled vegetables (*moḳallalāt*), sweet (*širinhā*), or sour (*toršihā*; Blair, 1984, p. 83).

The Rab'-e Rašidi also housed an atelier for book production. The original endowment provided for the annual copying of a 30-volume manuscript of the Qur'an and a collection of Prophetic traditions entitled *Jāme' al-oṣul fi aḥādīṯ al-rasul*, and a second appendix added several years later in 713/1313-14 (Eng. tr. by Wheeler Thackston, in Blair, 1995, pp. 114-15) directed the overseer to commission annually two copies (one in Arabic, the other in Persian) of six of



Rašid-al-Din's own works. The form of all these manuscripts was carefully specified: good, *bağdādi*-size paper with neat script, careful collation with the original in the library of Rab'-e Rašidi, leather binding with gilding (see [BOOKBINDING](#)), and boxes. Upon completion, the manuscripts were to be registered by the superintendent of the endowment and in the judiciary of Tabriz, and then distributed to the cities of Islam, the Arabic copies to Arab lands and the Persian copies to Persian lands, from largest to smallest, and deposited there in a school (*madrassa*) for consultation and copying by anyone who left a security deposit (Blair, 1984, pp. 81-82; Browne, III, pp. 77-78).

The handful of surviving manuscripts that were produced at the Rab'-e Rašidi show that the patron's instructions were executed faithfully. We have, for example, one volume (the 26th) from a 30-volume Qur'an manuscript completed in Šafar 715/May 1315 (Istanbul, Topkapı Palace Library, EH 248), with gold rubrics and fifth- and tenth-verse markers as specified in the endowment deed. There are also two copies of Rašid-al-Din's theological works entitled *Majmu'a-ye rašidiya*, one finished in 710/1310-11 (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale ms., Arabe 2324) and the other the following year (Doha, Museum of Islamic Art, ms. 6). Both share the similar large format and elaborate illumination of the Qur'an manuscript made for Rašid-al-Din; the Doha copy of the theological treatise is particularly significant as the only one of all the manuscripts to mention Tabriz as the site of production (Blair, 2014).

There are also three partial copies of the second volume of Rašid-al-Din's *Jāme' al-tawāriḳ* dealing with the non-Mongol peoples, as well as 49 illustrations detached from the first volume covering the history of the Mongols and Turks and mounted in albums in Istanbul and Berlin (for details see [JĀME' al-TAWĀRIḲ ii. ILLUSTRATIONS](#)). Comparison of the manuscripts shows that Rašid-al-Din's stipulation of two copies per year placed a heavy burden on the artists in his scriptorium, who had to develop ways to speed up production and cut costs by reducing the size of the page and simplifying the compositions. The backlog grew such that only the first three illustrations were completed in the third copy, dated a year before the patron's execution in 718/1318.

Following Rašid-al-Din's death, the site was looted, but his son [Ġiāt-al-Din Moḥammad](#) is said to have enlarged the complex after he assumed the vizierate in 1328. He also revived his father's activities, including the atelier of painting at the Rab'-e Rašidi, which may have produced the Great Mongol *Šāhnāma* for him there. After Ġiāt-al-Din's death in 1336, the site was again



plundered and soon lay devastated. According to the [Safavid](#) court chronicler [Eskandar Monši](#) (II, p. 826; tr., II, pp. 1032-33), in 1611 Shah 'Abbās selected the ruined site on the slopes of Mt. Soḳāb for a new fort, constructed from ruined buildings in Tabriz, particularly the tomb complex (*šanb*) of the Il-khanid sultan [Ġāzān Khan](#) on the opposite (west) side of the city. New work at the Rab'-e Rašidi included towers, water-storage tanks, a bath, and a mansion, which became the governor's residence.

The reconstruction, however, was short-lived, for when the French traveler Sir [John Chardin](#) (I, p. 184, cited in Wilber, p. 129) visited the area later in the 17th century, he was told that the ruins had been a great castle called the Qal'a-ye Rašidi that had been built four hundred years before by K̄āja Rašid. Traces of the ramparts and towers were still visible in 1939, when Donald Wilber recorded the site. He discovered fragments of carved plaster and tile mosaic in light and dark blue that are typical of Il-khanid work, as well as numerous fragments of multi-colored tile mosaic from the Safavid period (Wilber, p. 130). Virtually nothing remains today, but the memory of this artistic and scholarly complex lives on through its endowment deed (Hoffman, 2014, p. 173).

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