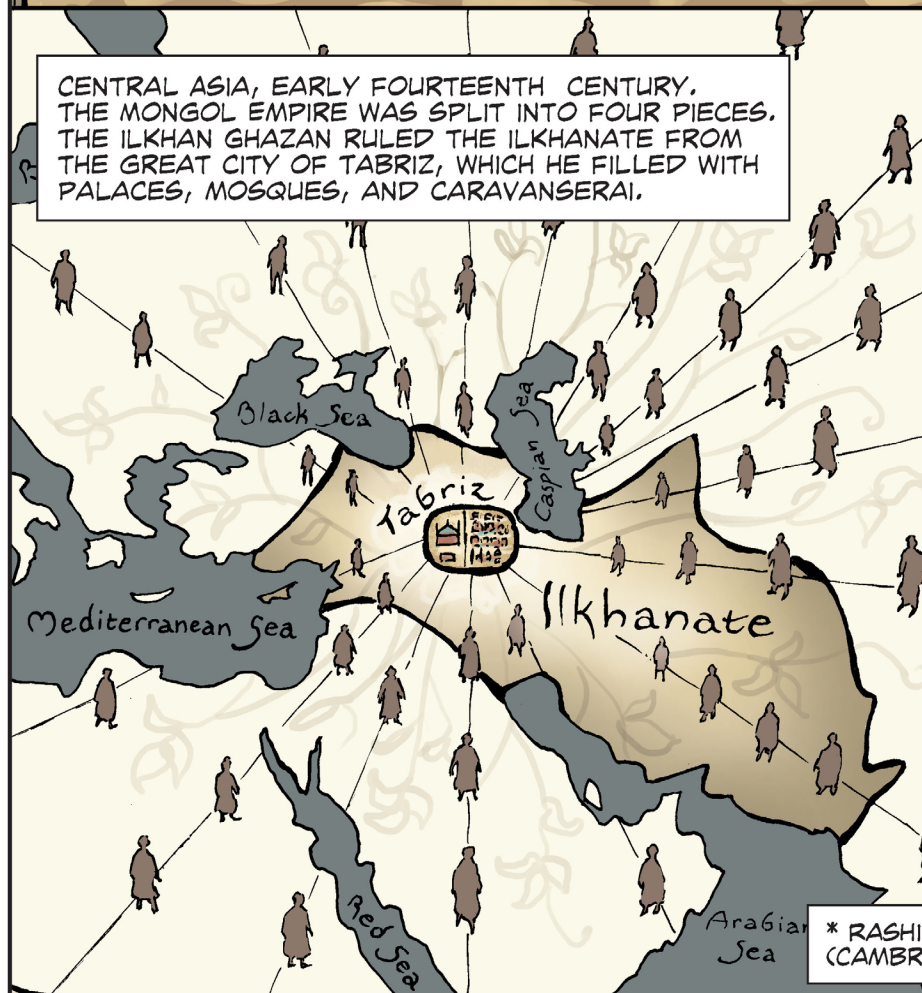


Rashid al-Din, 1247-1318

Author-Trevor R. Getz 8 Artist-Liz Clarke

ONE OF THE MOST POWERFUL ADVISERS OF THE MONGOL ILKHAN GHAZAN (WHO RULED FROM 1295 TO 1304), RASHID AL-DIN UNDERTOOK ONE OF THE FIRST WRITTEN HISTORIES, THE *JAMI' AL-TAWARIKH*. IN ART AND TEXT, THIS BOOK PRESENTED THE ILKHAN AS BOTH THE LEADING ISLAMIC RULER AND THE INHERITOR OF A VAST AND DIVERSE TRADITION FROM ACROSS EURASIA.

CENTRAL ASIA, EARLY FOURTEENTH CENTURY. THE MONGOL EMPIRE WAS SPLIT INTO FOUR PIECES. THE ILKHAN GHAZAN RULED THE ILKHANATE FROM THE GREAT CITY OF TABRIZ, WHICH HE FILLED WITH PALACES, MOSQUES, AND CARAVANSERAI.



BEHIND HIM STOOD HIS VIZIER, RASHID AL-DIN. BORN JEWISH, AL-DIN CONVERTED TO ISLAM AND ROSE THROUGH THE RANKS OF GOVERNMENT. AL-DIN UNDERSTOOD THAT THE ILKHAN MUST PLAY TWO ROLES. AS THE MUSLIM RULER OF A MUSLIM-MAJORITY EMPIRE, GHAZAN MUST BE ABLE TO PRESENT HIMSELF AS THE PROTECTOR OF ISLAM. BUT HE ALSO NEEDED TO BE ABLE TO RULE A DIVERSE POPULATION OF JEWS, BUDDHISTS, ZOROASTRIANS, AND CHRISTIANS, AND TO APPEAR POWERFUL TO TRADERS FROM AROUND THE WORLD.



"...in these days when, thank God, all corners of the earth are under our rule and that of Chinggis Khan's illustrious family, philosophers, astronomers, scholars, and historians of all religions and nations—Cathay and Machin [China], India and Kashmir, Tibetans, Uighurs, and other nations of Turks, Arabs, and Franks [Europeans]—are gathered in droves at our glorious court." *

Pacific Ocean

* RASHIDUDDIN FAZULLAH'S *JAMI' AL-TAWARIKH* (COMPENDIUM OF CHRONICLES): A HISTORY OF THE MONGOLS, TRANS. W. M. THACKSTON (CAMBRIDGE, MA: HARVARD UNIVERSITY, DEPARTMENT OF NEAR EASTERN LANGUAGES AND CIVILIZATIONS, 1998), I, 6.

HIS SOLUTION WAS THE *JAMI' AL-TAWARIKH*, A HISTORY OF THE WORLD THAT WAS MUSLIM IN ITS DESIGN AND CONTENTS, BUT FEATURED IDEAS AND ART FROM MANY REGIONS.



IT INCLUDED STORIES LIKE THE "BIRTH OF THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD," ILLUSTRATED IN A PICTURE THAT OWED A LOT ARTISTICALLY TO EUROPEAN DEPICTIONS OF THE BIRTH OF JESUS CHRIST.



AND ALSO BUDDHIST, CHRISTIAN, AND HINDU STORIES, AS WELL AS OTHERS THAT COMBINED THESE INFLUENCES, SUCH AS THIS STORY THAT SHOWED THE DEVIL TEMPTING THE BUDDHA, WHO IS DRESSED AS A MUSLIM MAN.



RASHID AL-DIN'S *JAMI' AL-TAWARIKH* MAY BE ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT BOOKS EVER PUBLISHED, AND IS A VITAL SOURCE FOR HISTORIANS TRYING TO UNDERSTAND HOW THE MONGOLS MANAGED TO RULE VAST AND DIVERSE EMPIRES.