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Gegründet von Georges Redard, herausgegeben von Nicholas Sims-Williams

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## Proceedings of the Third European Conference of Iranian Studies

Part 2

Mediaeval and Modern Persian Studies

Edited by  
Charles Melville

WIESBADEN 1999  
DR. LUDWIG REICHERT VERLAG

SOCIETAS IRANOLOGICA EUROPAEA

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

B.L.	British Library, London
BSOAS	<i>Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies</i>
CAJ	<i>Central Asiatic Journal</i>
CHI	<i>Cambridge History of Iran</i>
EI <sup>2</sup>	<i>Encyclopaedia of Islam</i> , 2nd edition
Elr	<i>Encyclopaedia Iranica</i>
IJMES	<i>International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies</i>
I.O.	India Office, London
IQ	<i>Islamic Quarterly</i>
JAOS	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
JESHO	<i>Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient</i>
JNES	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
JRAS	<i>Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society</i>
JSAI	<i>Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam</i>
MIDEO	<i>Mélanges de l'Institut Dominicain d'Études Orientales du Caire</i>
REI	<i>Revue des Études Islamiques</i>
ZDMG	<i>Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft</i>

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## SOME MONGOL *INSHĀ'* -COLLECTIONS: THE JUVAYNI LETTERS

Jürgen Paul

*Inshā'*-collections<sup>1</sup> from the Mongol period in Iranian history have not received the same amount of attention as their pre-Mongol counterparts; whereas the collections of letters known under the names of Badi' Atabeg Juvayni, Baha' al-Din Baghdadi, Rashid al-Din Vatvat<sup>2</sup> and others are widely read and studied, this is not the case with later texts. This may be for a number of reasons. First, the text or texts exist only in manuscript. Secondly, for the Ilkhanid period, narrative and even documentary sources offer a wealth of information not readily available for earlier centuries, above all the period immediately preceding the Mongol invasion. And of course, there may be doubts as to the reliability of the evidence to be gained from *insha'* as a literary genre.

In this paper, I want to introduce the letters going under the name of Shams al-Din Muhammad Juvayni, the *ṣāhib-dīvān* who served under the Ilkhans Abaqa (r. 1265-82) and Ahmad Tegüder (1282-4) until he was executed under Arghun (16 October 1284).<sup>3</sup> The Sahib-divan not being the only author, the texts might conveniently be called the Juvayni letters.

To the best of my knowledge, only one manuscript of these letters has hitherto been used at all. This is the manuscript kept at Istanbul university (Farsça Yazmalar 552 - henceforth: FY). Among the scholars quoting this manuscript, the author of the article on Juvayni in the *İslam Ansiklopedisi* and Jean Aubin are to be mentioned.<sup>4</sup> With Aubin, there is the difficulty that in his latest work, *Emirs mongols*, he does not give any references and does not include a bibliography, so we cannot know whether he consulted other manuscripts than the one including the

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<sup>1</sup> I want to thank all those who helped me with manuscripts and microfilms: Dr. O.F. Akimushkin (St Petersburg), Dr. Esther Peskes and Dr. Chr. Neumann (Istanbul).

<sup>2</sup> Badi' al-Din Atabeg Juvayni, *'Atabat al-kataba*, ed. M. Qazvini and 'A. Iqbal (Tehran 1324/1950); Baha' al-Din Baghdadi, *al-Tawassul ilāl-tarassul*, ed. A. Bahmanyar (Tehran 1315/1936); Rashid al-Din Vatvat, *Nāma-hā-yi Rashīd al-Dīn Vatvāt*, ed. Qasim Tuysirkani (Tehran 1338/1959).

<sup>3</sup> Information on the Sahib-divan in general is to be found in the *İslam Ansiklopedisi*, s.v. Cüveyni (M.F. Köprülü); on his execution in particular, see J. Aubin, *Emirs mongols et vizirs persans dans les remous de l'acculturation*, *Studia Iranica*, Cahier no. 15 (Paris 1995), pp. 29-36.

<sup>4</sup> See preceding note. I do not know of any other publications mentioning the Juvayni letters.



piece he mentions. There are however at least two more manuscripts containing letters from the same sources, another fragment in the Bağdatlı Vehbi Efendi (2125/III - henceforth: BV) section of the Süleymaniye library,<sup>5</sup> and the third and largest in St Petersburg (C 816 - henceforth: SP), being the second part, a sort of sequel to a pre-Mongol collection known as the *Aḥkām-i salāṭīn-i māzī*.<sup>6</sup> I have little doubt that more fragments are extant in other libraries.

All three manuscripts seem fragmentary, offering widely different materials, and I am not sure whether a “full copy” ever existed or whether Shams al-Din Juvayni or any other person prepared an official version, meant for the public in the way some of the pre-Mongol collections were.

FY has 40 pieces on the first 31 folios of the manuscript; later on, there are quotations from earlier as well as later letters, a story of an embassy led by the qadi Nasir al-Milla wa'l-Din to the Mamluk court written as a letter to somebody styled Asil al-Milla wa'l-Din (ff. 35a-40b); the following pages are typically taken up by resonant addresses, poetry and stylistic exercises of little or no historical interest. SP has 81 pieces on 64 folios (146b-210a); samples of poetry follow up to f. 215a. BV has 25 complete pieces (and the beginning of another one, which is said to be by somebody who might be identified as Nasir al-Din Tusi) on 14 folios (153b-166b); this manuscript is clearly fragmentary since we are left in the middle of a sentence. None of the manuscripts can be clearly and easily dated; there is something like a colophon only in SP, where the copyist reveals himself as Muhammad b. Sadr al-Din al-Khwarazmi (otherwise unknown?), but no date is given. Very few of the letters themselves carry dates: 667 (SP 37), 680 (BV 1), 683 (SP 36), and 683 once again, being the date of the Sahib-divan's execution. Other letters are dated by the day and the month only, leaving out the year; this is

<sup>5</sup> I came across this when I investigated some manuscripts in Istanbul, see J. Paul, Anonyme arabische und persische *inṣā'*-Handschriften aus den Sammlungen der Süleymaniye-Bibliothek (Istanbul), *ZDMG* 144 (1994), 301-29, no. 4. I was not aware at that time that the text in question contained letters by the Juvayni brothers.

<sup>6</sup> Description of the manuscript: N.D. Miklukho-Maklai, *Persidskie i tadzhikskie rukopisi instituta Narodov Azii AN SSSR* (Moscow 1964), no. 4305. An extended description, but of the first part only, was done by Köymen, Selçuklu Devri Kaynaklarına Dair Araştırmalar I: Büyük Selçuklu İmparatorluğu Devrine Ait Münşeat Mecmuaları, *Ankara Üniversitesi DTCFD*, Cilt 8 (1951), 537 ff. Köymen gives a short summary of all the texts in this collection, and shows their origins whenever they could be ascertained. The manuscript was equally used by H. Horst, *Die Staatsverwaltung der Großselğūqen und Ḥōrazmšāhs (1038 - 1231)* (Wiesbaden 1964). From this title, it appears that Horst, too, was interested only in the pre-Mongol part. I have myself used the first, pre-Mongol part of the manuscript in my *Inshā'*-collections as a source on Iranian history, in *Proceedings of the Second European Conference of Iranian Studies* (IsMEO, Rome 1995), 535-50.

evidently what we would expect from 'real' letters, since the year would be known to the original reader. Places from which letters are sent are concentrated in western Iran and Azarbayjan, adding Baghdad, since the Sahib-divan was generally travelling around with the imperial ordu, and his brother 'Ata-Malik residing at the Iraqi city; but of course, only a small minority of letters carry placenames. The handwriting is of varying quality, all basically *naskhī*; SP is difficult reading since most of the diacritical dots are left out. The vast majority of the letters occur in one manuscript only, 18 twice, and only two in all three of them. Three of the doubles concern BV. This allows for a total of about 120 pieces, since another text is repeated twice in SP.

It is difficult to decide how the collections have been made. Since SP was copied together with samples which at times are very close to Badi' Atabeg Juvayni's '*Atabat al-kataba*'<sup>7</sup> (but by no means identical with this work), it cannot be ruled out that there was some kind of family archive; such an archive might be alluded to in the letters themselves: Harun, the Sahib-divan's son, is asked to stick to the family's 120 year-old tradition of well-styled epistolary prose (FY 22, SP 25);<sup>8</sup> this would take us to the days of Badi' Atabeg. The author or authors might then have chosen whatever letters they had access to, and, once 'published' in this way, they may have been passed on to subsequent authors.

Texts that appear twice present considerable differences, making it difficult to decide which manuscript might be closest to the 'original'. Similarly, one cannot be sure whether any of the manuscripts depends on another one, which would seem to be precluded by the simple observation that each of them has a large body of independent material.

The suggestion of a family archive being the ultimate source of the collection(s) is enhanced by the fact that the letters do not have one author only. Besides Shams al-Din the Sahib-divan, his brother 'Ata-Malik, author of the *Jahān-gushā* and governor of Baghdad (d. 1282), is most frequently mentioned, whole passages being presented under the heading *min inshā' al-ṣāhib 'Alā' al-Dīn* (in SP). Other letters stem from "the judge of Herat", a personality whose identity I

<sup>7</sup> See note 2 above and Köymen's work (note 6). The '*Atabat al-kataba*' is one of the best-known pre-Mongol insha'-collections as is evidenced by the relatively large number of studies devoted to it. A (partial) translation was published by G.M. Kurpalidis as *Stupeni sovershenstvovaniya katibov* (Moscow 1985); this author has also written a number of articles on this work. Mention must further be made of A.K.S. Lambton's study, The administration of Sanjar's empire as illustrated in the '*Atabat al-kataba*', *BSOAS* 20 (1957), 367 ff.; she has also taken up the subject in her *State and government in medieval Islam* (Oxford 1981).

<sup>8</sup> References are to document numbers.

have not been able to ascertain, and there are other authors besides them, since the collections include letters to the Juvayni brothers as well as texts written by them. Among these other writers, Mu‘in al-Din called the Parvana (who held this office from 1256 down to his execution in 1277) holds a prominent place. This, too, is reminiscent of the *‘Atabat al-kataba*, which is divided into two parts: first, letters written by the author on behalf of the sultan, called *sulṭāniyyāt*, and second, letters written to the author on official as well as private matters, called *ikhvāniyyāt*. In the collections under study, no such system is visible, allowing the possibility that the letters were chosen from their source not according to a plan of publication, but in a more uncontrolled way. The addressees of those letters that the Juvayni brothers themselves wrote are mostly members of the family; an important part was directed by one brother to the other. Another important part are letters by Shams al-Din to his sons, Harun in the first place.

Place names as well as personal names occur in a number of letters. Generally, in the study of this literary genre, this may be taken to mean that the pieces transmitted in the collection are based on ‘real’ texts, that is to say, letters that were at a given time really written in a form not too remote from the one we have. The literary genre of *insha*’, as is known, brings together ‘real’ material in this sense and texts meant as stylistic exercises. But the question of what degree of authenticity a given collection or an individual piece in a collection may claim is rather complicated, as will be shown in a little example later on.

Reading the Juvayni letters is in a way a disappointing experience, since they include very little business correspondence. This concerns not only the *sulṭāniyyāt* in a strict sense, i.e. letters (or copies, drafts etc. of letters) written on behalf of the ruler, such as letters of appointment, state correspondence and the like, but also private affairs or letters written to the Juvayni brothers by people asking for something in a more business-like fashion. Business of this kind is very prominent in the pre-Mongol collections, the *‘Atabat al-kataba* being no exception, on the contrary.

The business letters are: Liberation of an Indian slave, written by the Sahib-divan himself (FY 9), a *fath-nāma* on the conquest of Darband (FY 6; this letter was probably addressed to ‘Ata-Malik, since an answer is extant in SP 71), a report on an inundation of the Tigris at Baghdad (SP 29), a detailed list of what Harun is to do in the region of Tabriz in the way of administrative control (FY 7, the letter used by Aubin and indeed one of the most interesting individual pieces<sup>9</sup>), a letter

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<sup>9</sup> Aubin, p. 23.

announcing that the writer (the Sahib-divan) has been saved from false accusations by the grace of Abaqa (FY 4, BV 1, SP 39; thus one of the two letters included in all three manuscripts), a letter about the reopening of the *hajj* routes (FY 28, SP 37, dated 667 only in SP), a letter about the *evoġlan* (Mongol princes) collecting more than their due at Baghdad (SP 29), a grant of *idrār* to the shaykh of a *zāviya* in order to allow him to feed paupers and visitors (FY 19), an appointment for a professor (*mudarris*) at Tabriz (FY 1, SP 80), a report about amirs trying to take in *muḥāsabāt* in Khuzistan province (SP 28), an appointment for a qadi (town not named) (FY 26), a letter requesting somebody called Muhyi al-Din to justify his name by reclaiming waste lands and repairing the irrigation works (BV 5). Taken together, these letters form a small, but respectable source on social and administrative history. Yet, the information to be gained from it is certainly a far cry from sources like the pre-Mongol insha'-collections.

This does not need to have any special reason and might be due either to the odds and chances of the texts' transmission or else to personal taste (remember that Rashid al-Din Vatvat also includes little business and much rhetoric), but on the other hand, we might feel entitled to ask questions: How many of the affairs treated, say, in the '*Atabat al-kataba* were conducted in the Persian language in the early Ilkhanid period? What about the real position the Juvayni brothers held in their time as compared to earlier 'viziers'? Was the stress on rhetoric a kind of personal choice or does it signify a loss of importance? Less matter, more words? On the other hand, we might see here a desire to affirm and emphasise the writers' Persian and Muslim identity. Whereas the Juvayni letters are maybe not a first-class source for studies on business and politics, they certainly are of primary importance for the way the authors saw their own position in the social and political world they were acting in.

A very large number of the letters deal with the subject probably most suited for stylistic exercises: the basic fact of all correspondence that the addressee is absent from the writer. Since in many, if not most cases, addressee and writer are members of the Juvayni family, this offers ample occasion for lamenting the absence of the beloved brother or son (or else, friend, patron or the like) and expressing hopes of seeing the person in question in the near future. Springtime is depicted as the season when plants, birds and animals come to life again, they thrive and rejoice, giving an example for humans. Spring is equally the season of travel, when roads and mountain passes are open once again, and it is therefore the season when longing for the absent is most intensely and dolefully felt, or else,

hopes for a meeting seem most realistic. Several letters allude to the addressee's having announced his imminent arrival or else give excuses for not being able to come; some give expression to the writer's disappointment over a meeting having had to be cancelled. Writers enquire about the addressee's health and give information about the state of affairs at the senders' place, thus giving a personal touch to parts of the correspondence.

This group of letters may or may not be authentic: this is difficult to ascertain since the topic lends itself so easily to 'mere rhetoric'; generally speaking, *insha'*-texts always tend to give what the writer (the author, the collector or else the copyist) thinks the concerned persons ought to have written, neglecting sometimes what really was written. And, whereas in 'business' letters, at least the way business was conducted may be correctly represented in the texts, the more 'personal' letters evoked here are sometimes clearly ideal ones.

The problem of authenticity is maybe best illustrated by a somewhat spectacular piece. This is a letter (or maybe two letters) of farewell written by the Sahib-divan allegedly shortly before or even during his execution. In this case, the question of authenticity cannot be answered from internal textual evidence alone.

When they wanted to make a martyr of the now martyred sahib divan al-mamalik and had already beaten him a lot and also struck him once with the sabre, he came forward with a wish and asked for a moment's leave. He turned his head towards heaven and said, "All that came from you was good, be it joy or pain", then he confessed his faith and put down these few words in his own most honoured hand and asked (the letter) to be sent to Tabriz to a group of notables: "When I took an oracle from the Holy Qur'an, the following verse came up: *Those who say "God is our Lord" and follow the straight path afterwards: the angels will descend towards them [and say]: Do not be afraid and do not worry. Look forward to Paradise - it has been promised to you [41:30, my own translation].* God Most High who has poured good things over his slave in this passing world and has not refused him any of his wishes wanted that the good tidings from that lasting world reached him in this passing world, too. Since this is so, Mawlana Muhyi al-Din, Mawlana Fakhr al-Din and the brethren in faith, Mawlana Afdal al-Din, Mawlana Shams al-Din and Mawlana Humam al-Din and all the other great imams and shaykhs whose individual mention would be too long and not have place here, should needs receive word of this good tidings, so they should know that I have cut off all links [with this world] and have begun my journey. They, too, should help with prayers for my salvation (*du'ā-yi khayr*), *wa'l-salām*." (SP 76, 205a; see also FY 27, 21b without the introduction).

After that, the date of the Sahib-divan's execution is given as Monday, 4 Sha'ban 683; the same date is in FY, adding "after the second prayer", and the

place, at Ahar. FY leaves out the names of the addressees and does not say where the note was directed; this is an example of the importance of variants between the three manuscripts. In the text preceding this note, SP 75 (neither to be found in FY nor in BV), the Sahib-divan recommends his sons to the mercy of God, but he likewise occupies himself with more worldly affairs. After a general introduction, he says:

If my son Atabek and his mother H.r.s.k Khatun choose to go to *vilāyat* (home? to Central Asia?), they may do so. Nawruz and Mas'ud shall accompany [their? Atabek's?] mother. If they [the Mongols, Arghun's party] leave them any of their belongings, they shall take them and be contented with it. Where the great haram [*haram-i buzurgh*] can go, there they may stay. The two brothers shall stay at my grave. If they can give something to the construction of Shaykh Fakhr al-Din's *khānqāh*, they are to help with everything, and they can go there, too. Further. Mu'mina Khatun has never seen any rest, either. If she wants to, she can marry. Farah-Allah [another girl? daughter?] and her mother shall be with Atabek. I have given over Zakariya [a slave? a young boy?] together with the estates of the *shāhinshāhī* tuman and other things to the amir Buqa, turn him (them) over to him. Further: the estates are to be kept account of [or: the other estates are to be kept account of [*dīgar amlāk-rā arza dārand*], if they return any of it, if not, be contented.

The (short) remainder of the text consists of religious blessings.

It is hard to decide which of these 'testaments', if any, or both, is 'authentic'. The first text very much stresses Muslim qualities, betraying a wish to underline that the Sahib-divan died a *shahīd's* death; there may have been people interested in a vision of the Juvayni family as not only good Muslims, but also champions of the Islamic faith. That this was the way they wanted to be seen is indeed sometimes visible in the letters, also, e.g. in the text announcing the reopening of the hajj route via Baghdad.

Now, the situation is complicated by the fact that these two 'testaments' appear as one letter in Rashid al-Din.<sup>10</sup> Automatically, the question arises whether

<sup>10</sup> Rashid al-Din Fadl-Allah, *Jāmi' al-tawārīkh*, ed. M. Rawshan and M. Musavi (Tehran 1373/1994), II, pp. 1158-9. This text has the following main variants: a) H.r.s.k. Khatun is called Khushak Khatun, perhaps because SP omits most of the diacritical points, and "r" and "w" cannot always be distinguished; b) the printed edition adds that Nawruz and Mas'ud, together with their mother, will be in attendance on Bulughan Khatun, whose name is omitted in SP; c) the printed edition leaves out the "great haram" sentence; d) Mu'mina Khatun is referred to as *fulānī*; d) Rashid al-Din includes "other places, or villages" (*mavāzī*) given over to amir Buqa, not in SP. Everything is there: additions, lacunae, emendations. I cannot decide which text might be closer to a possible 'original'.

Rashid al-Din has copied them out of our source of vice versa or if both took them from a common source. This cannot be decided at the moment, since none of the extant manuscripts is clearly datable; SP might be the oldest one, and a possible dating might point to the 14th century or maybe even earlier. Since the three manuscripts were most probably not copied from one another (see above), the earlier dating might not be out of the question. However, all this is highly conjectural; maybe only further manuscripts of the Juvayni letters will allow an answer. For the time being, the question has to be left open.

Thus, the Juvayni letters can in a restricted way be used as a source for business under the Mongols, and for personal affairs of the Juvayni family (which in itself is important enough). They can further be made to yield insight into the way the Juvayni family perceived its role in the Ilkhanid state; in the case of 'Ata-Malik, his letters could be compared to his views in his historical work, the *Jahān-gushā*. And there is a third complex for the study of which the Juvayni letters impose themselves: social relations between members of the Iranian elite, men having succeeded in gaining access to the inner circle of Mongol power, and people outside. Once again, this complex also suffers from the lack of business-like information in the letters. But even if this seriously impedes our investigation, it does not render it impossible.

The terms used for relationships between sender and addressee bespeak a marked continuity from the pre-Mongol to the early Ilkhanid period.<sup>11</sup> The vocabulary is still that of patrons and clients, of compacts of patronage passed on over generations. This is evident for instance in letters of condolence (SP 35, 19; maybe FY 30). Typically, the addressee, son of the deceased patron, is reminded of the benefits his father was in the habit of extending to the writer; the writer further claims that he (and his family) have always been among the most faithful servants (clients) of the deceased person. He states that a patron's duties include spreading the wings of security over the servants' heads, making them profit from ever-increasing benefits, protecting them from enemies, keeping in mind the rights they acquired in long-lasting service and not heeding the insinuations of envious and malevolent persons (enumerated explicitly in SP 19, f. 154b). These duties are conceived of as religious ones, they are incumbent on the patrons because God has granted them so much fortune. The clients' duties are obedience and service,

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<sup>11</sup> For these questions, see my "Inshā'-collections", and my book *Herrscher, Gemeinwesen, Vermittler: Ostiran und Transoxanien in vormongolischer Zeit* (Beiruter Texte und Studien no. 59, Beirut and Stuttgart 1996).

publicly praising the patron; the saying “A grateful person deserves increased benefit” (*wa'l-shākir yastaḥaqqu 'l-mazīd*) is a well-known formula (SP 63, f. 190b). As in the pre-Mongol period, these compacts of patronage are called ‘*ahd*’. It is important that they function every now and then, since “A long ‘ahd is easily forgotten” (*tawl al-'ahd mansīyyun*; SP 11, f. 150b). This is evidently the reason for many of the letters where the writers simply seem to remind the addressee of their existence and lasting fidelity and preparedness to fulfil any service they might be entrusted with. Thus, there might be business of this kind in letters we would be reading as ‘mere rhetoric’.

A term for “client, servant” in this sense is *chākar*, not easily, if at all, found in the pre-Mongol collections, but rather frequent in the Juvayni letters. This word, of Central Asian origin,<sup>12</sup> has come to mean “myself” in modern usage as an equivalent of *banda* in epistolary style. But even *banda* is not clearly ‘rhetoric’ in the Juvayni letters, and this is even more the case with *chakar*. Both terms occur together in some places (FY 44, SP 50), or else, *chakar* is very close to *banda* (SP 42) since it serves to mean the writer. A declaration of subservience sent to somebody styled Baha’ al-haqq wa’l-din, Shihab al-Islam wa’l-Muslimin (who may be one of the Juvayni family since the term “most noble of the viziers in this world” occurs in the address) is ended like this: “This true slave is fulfilling, according to the habits of the compact and in the known manner, the obligations of a true servant and the duties of a personal client. Day and night, he is constantly and conscientiously busy praising and thanking that Highness”; to conclude, he expresses his hope to be permitted to kiss his patron’s hand in the near future (SP 50, f. 181b). Another instance for this term is the condolatory letter quoted above (SP 35, f. 169b).

To conclude: Even if the Juvayni letters do not offer the same richness of information as some of the pre-Mongol insha’-collections, they cannot be neglected as a source for the early Ilkhanid period, and it is to be hoped that more fragments will be identified in other libraries.

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<sup>12</sup> For this institution (and for the term as well) see Chr. Beckwith, Aspects of the early history of the Central Asian Guard Corps in Islam, *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 4 (1984), 29-43.