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Ibn Kammūnah Is Going to Hell! Muslim-Jewish Polemics at the Ilkhanid Court

The Ilkhanid vizier, physician, and theologian Rashīd al-Dīn (ca. 1247–1318) has figured prominently in Professor Reuven Amitai's scholarship. Amitai explored descriptions of Rashīd al-Dīn in Arabic histories and biographical dictionaries from Mamluk Egypt and Syria, demonstrating that they can offer new insight on his career and character.[1] As for the Mamluks' perceptions of Rashīd al-Dīn, Amitai noted that while Mamluk authors "generally express only positive opinions as to his orthodoxy and commitment to his adopted faith," they also highlight Ilkhanid individuals who besmirched Rashīd al-Dīn's reputation. These scholars claimed that Rashīd al-Dīn, a Jewish convert to Islam, continued to adhere to his Jewish faith despite his conversion. They especially expressed their disapproval of his philosophically-oriented exegesis of the Quran, where, according to their accusations, he had falsified *(tabdīl)* God's word. According to Mamluk authors, after Rashīd al-Dīn's execution, his body was mutilated, his head was paraded throughout Tabriz, and his profane writings were burned.[2]

While Rashīd al-Dīn is best known for his world history, *Jāmiʿ al-tawārīkh* (The compendium of chronicles), one of the earliest examples of Islamic world histories and one of the most important sources for the history of the Mongol Empire,[3] he also authored extensive treatises on other subjects, including scientific topics such as medicine and agriculture,[4] but mainly on Islamic theology *(kalām)* and Quranic commentary *(tafsīr)*. Written during the decade following the Mongol ruler Öljeitü's (r. 1304–16) enthronement in 1305, Rashīd al-Dīn col-

[1] Reuven Amitai-Preiss, "New Material from the Mamluk Sources for the Biography of Rashid al-Din," in *The Court of the Il-khans, 1290–1340,* ed. Teresa Fitzherbert and Julian Raby (Oxford, 1996), 23–37. Amitai has also studied Rashīd al-Dīn's own attitude toward the Mamluks: Reuven Amitai, "Rashīd al-Dīn as an Historian of the Mamluks,"in *Rashīd al-Dīn: Agent and Mediator of Cultural Exchange in Ilkhanid Iran,* ed. Anna Akasoy, Charles Burnett, and Ronit Yoeli-Tlalim (London, 2013), 71–88. See also: idem, "Jews at the Mongol Court in Iran: Cultural Brokers or Minor Actors in a Cultural Bloom?" in *Cultural Brokers at Mediterranean Courts in the Middle Ages,* ed. Marc von der Nöh et al. (Paderborn, 2013), 33–45.

[2] See: Amitai-Preiss, "New Material," 32–33; Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Khalīl ibn Aybak al-Ṣafadī, *Aʿyān al-ʿaṣr wa-aʿwān al-naṣr,* ed. ʿA. Abū Zayd (Beirut, 1998), 4:42–43.

[3] On this work, see Stefan Kamola, *Making Mongol History: Rashid al-Din and the Jamiʿ al-Tawarikh* (Edinburgh, 2019).

[4] Thomas Allsen, *Culture and Conquest in Mongol Eurasia* (Cambridge, 2001).

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lected these treatises into several compilations.[5] Rashīd al-Dīn's theological and philosophical works are embedded within broader intellectual currents that shaped the eastern Islamic world. His writings were informed by the thirteenth-century reconciliation of Greek-derived reason and Islamic theology and *tafsīr,* following in particular the influential work of twelfth-century Ashʿarite theologian and exegetist Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 1210).[6]

Rashīd al-Dīn's earliest theological writings, especially his exegesis of specific Quranic verses, collected in the *Kitāb al-tawḍīḥāt* (Book of clarifications), were the subject of some controversy in the Ilkhanate. One Ilkhanid intellectual whose critical remarks regarding Rashīd al-Dīn's theological writings appear in Mamluk accounts is the judge, physician, philosopher, and astronomer Quṭb al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī (d. 710/1311). In her article comparing the Mamluk attitude toward the two Ilkhanid physicians—al-Shīrāzī and Rashīd al-Dīn—Leigh Chipman drew attention to al-Shīrāzī's reproach of Rashīd al-Dīn.[7] Al-Shīrāzī's comments on the vizier were reported in Ibn Rāfiʿ al-Salāmī's biographical dictionary of Ilkhanid-era Baghdadi scholars, in which the author transmitted the story from the Ilkhanid librarian Ibn al-Fuwaṭī's (642–723/1244–1323) now lost biographical dictionary.[8] Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, who had started his career as a librarian and copyist in the Maragha observatory, had studied with al-Shīrāzī. According to Ibn al-Fuwaṭī (as transmitted by Ibn Rāfiʿ), when al-Shīrāzī was told that Rashīd al-Dīn had composed a Quranic commentary, al-Shīrāzī "said to his friends: 'And I had intended to comment on the Torah' and he began doing so; and when he heard that he [Rashīd al-Dīn] had composed a treatise on the verse in which the angels say 'We have no knowledge save what Thou hast taught us' [Quran 2:32], he [al-Shīrāzī] said [about Rashīd al-Dīn]: He should have stopped with 'We have no knowledge.'"[9]

[5] On these works, see: Joseph van Ess, *Der Wesir und seine Gelehrten* (Wiesbaden, 1981), 12–21; Dorothea Krawulsky, *The Mongol Īlkhāns and their Vizier Rashīd al-Dīn* (Frankfurt, 2011), 77–86; and Jonathan Brack, *An Afterlife for the Khan: Muslims, Buddhists, and Sacred Kingship in Mongol Iran and Eurasia* (Oakland, 2023).

[6] Brack, *An Afterlife,* 12–19.

[7] Leigh Chipman, "The ʿAllāma and the Ṭabīb: A Note on Biographies of Two Doctors, Rashīd al-Dīn and Quṭb al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī," in *Rashīd al-Dīn: Agent and Mediator,* ed. Akasoy et al., 115–26.

[8] Only a few volumes of his *Majmaʿ al-ādāb fī muʿjam al-alqāb* have survived. On Ibn al-Fuwaṭī as a valuable source for Ilkhanid intellectual life, see Devin DeWeese, "Cultural Transmission and Exchange in the Mongol Empire: Notes from the Biographical Dictionary of Ibn al-Fuwaṭī," in *Beyond the Legacy of Genghis Khan,* ed. Linda Komaroff (Leiden, 2006), 11–29; and Michal Biran, "Libraries, Books, and Transmission of Knowledge in Ilkhanid Baghdad," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 62 (2019): 464–502.

[9] Muḥammad Abū al-Maʿālī Ibn Rāfiʿ al-Salāmī, *Tārīkh ʿulamāʾ Baghdād al-musammá muntakhab al-mukhtār,* ed. ʿAbbās al-ʿAzāwī (Beirut, 2000), 177.

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Ibn al-Fuwaṭī reported that al-Shīrāzī showed contempt for the Muslim convert Rashīd al-Dīn and his Quranic commentary, suggesting that it is akin to having him, a Muslim, write a commentary on the Jewish scriptures. Yet, strangely, al-Shīrāzī is also listed among the endorsers of Rashīd al-Dīn's Quranic commentaries. Rashīd al-Dīn had collected endorsements *(taqrīẓāt)* and praises from about ninety reputed scholars for his "Book of clarifications."[10] He provided their enthusiastic "testimonies" at the start of his "Majmūʿah Rashīdīyah" (Rashidi collection), his collected theological works. The first two endorsements in this long list were penned by al-Shīrāzī himself, indicating perhaps the vizier's high regard for al-Shīrāzī and his interest in gaining the latter's approval. Both endorsements were written during al-Shīrāzī's stay in Tabriz and exceedingly praised Rashīd al-Dīn's commentaries and observations.[11] How do we reconcile these two conflicting representations of al-Shīrāzī's attitude toward Rashīd al-Dīn? Had al-Shīrāzī praised the vizier's work simply to gain his patronage and support after relocating to Tabriz, or was he acting out of fear of Rashīd al-Dīn's retribution were he not to enthusiastically endorse his work as other scholars in Tabriz were doing? Alternatively, is it possible that the dismissive comments he made to some unidentified colleagues (and then reported by Ibn al-Fuwaṭī) were designed to curry favor with those in the Ilkhanate or the Mamluk Sultanate holding animosity toward Rashīd al-Dīn, especially considering his Jewish background?

While there are no certain answers to these questions, al-Shīrāzī may have contributed more to Rashīd al-Dīn's collected theological works than his official approval. Al-Shīrāzī seems to have played a pivotal role in facilitating Rashīd al-Dīn's access to the religious refutation of the Baghdadi Jewish philosopher ʿIzz al-Dawlah Saʿd ibn Manṣūr Ibn Kammūnah (d. in or after 1284), which the Ilkhanid Muslim convert appears to dispute in his anti-Jewish apologetics in two treatises in his "Book of clarifications." Thus, al-Shīrāzī, whose disparaging comments derided the vizier's Jewish heritage, may have also aided (perhaps unintentionally) Rashīd al-Dīn's attempt to distance himself from his pre-conversion past.

In honor of Professor Amitai's retirement, this article offers some initial findings concerning the triangular relationship between three Ilkhanid intellectuals: the convert and vizier Rashīd al-Dīn, the Muslim polymath al-Shīrāzī, and

[10] On the "Book of clarifications," see Brack, *An Afterlife,* 15–18. On the *taqrīẓāt,* see Van Ess, *Der Wesir,* 22–38; Krawulsky, *The Mongol Īlkhāns,* 127–30.

[11] Al-Shīrāzī's first endorsement is dated to Rajab 706 (1307) and the other to the month of Shaʿbān that same year. "Majmūʿah Rashīdīyah," Bibliothèque nationale de France MS arabe 2324, fols. 4v–5r; Van Ess, *Der Wesir,* 22. Al-Shīrāzī seems to be the only individual who provided two endorsements.

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the Jewish philosopher Ibn Kammūnah. By exploring these links, it also sheds light on one of the least studied aspects of Rashīd al-Dīn's engagement with this Jewish heritage: his Muslim polemics against Judaism and the Jews. In this way, the article seeks to contribute to another topic Amitai has explored in his influential scholarship: the place of Jews and Judaism at the Ilkhanid court.

Ibn Kammūnah and His "Examination of the Three Faiths"

A Baghdadi Jewish and Ilkhanid official with close ties to the powerful al-Juwaynī family, Ibn Kammūnah and his philosophical writings had a major role in the development of Islamic philosophy in the eastern Islamic world.[12] His commentaries—especially his commentary on Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī's (d. 586/1191) *Talwīḥāt*—gained popularity among Muslim scholars during the fourteenth century, but especially in subsequent centuries.[13] Furthermore, as Sabine Schmidtke and Reza Pourjavady showed, Ibn Kammūnah's writings influenced al-Shīrāzī's philosophical works. The two were contemporaneous, and while there are no concrete indications that they ever met in person, al-Shīrāzī spent some time in Baghdad during the 1260s when Ibn Kammūnah was likely there as well.[14]

Another important connection between al-Shīrāzī and Ibn Kammūnah is found in the codex copied by hand by al-Shīrāzī in Konya in 685/1286. This manuscript is currently part of the Marʿashī collection in Qum (MS 12868).[15] The codex comprises some miscellany, unidentified fragmentary texts, poems in Persian and Arabic, and also several significant works. These include a unique early Ilkhanid chronicle titled "Akhbār-i Mughūlān" (Mongol news), which has been attributed to al-Shīrāzī but was likely only copied by him,[16] "Ifḥām al-

[12] Sabine Schmidtke, "Ibn Kammūna, Saʿd," in *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World,* ed. Norman Stillman (Leiden, 2010), 504–7.

[13] Reza Pourjavady and Sabine Schmidtke, *A Jewish Philosopher of Baghdad: ʿIzz al-Dawla Ibn Kammūna (d. 683/1284) and His Writings* (Leiden, 2006), 25.

[14] Ibid., 29–34.

[15] Reza Pourjavady and Sabine Schmidtke, "The Quṭb al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī (d. 710/1311) Codex (Ms. Marʿashī 12868) (Studies on Quṭb al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī II)," *Studia Iranica* 36 (2007): 279–301 (283–85, for the manuscript and its copies).

[16] On "Akhbār-i Mughūlān," see George Lane, "Mongol News: The *Akhbār-i mughulān dar Anbāneh Qutb* by Quṭb al-Dīn Maḥmūd ibn Masʿūd Shīrāzī," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society,* series 3, 22, no. 3–4 (2012): 541–59. The work has been edited and published as Quṭb al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī, *Akhbār-i Mughūlān dar anbānah-'i Mullā Quṭb,* ed. Irāj Afshār (Qum, 2010). For its translation: *The Mongols in Iran: Quṭb Al-Dīn Shīrāzī's Akhbār-i Moghulān,* trans. and ed. George Lane (Abingdon, 2018).

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yahūd," the refutation of Judaism by the Muslim convert Samawʾal al-Maghribī (d. 576/1180), and two texts by Ibn Kammūnah. The first is a philosophical treatise and the second is the *Tanqīḥ al-abḥāth lil-milal al-thalāth* (Examination of the three faiths), which he completed in Jumādá II 679/September–October 1280.[17]

The "Examination" is not a religious refutation in the "classical" sense. It sets out from the premise that Islam, Christianity, and Judaism all agree on one single theory of prophecy that, moreover, fits a philosophical mold, and thus frames the debate within a well-demarcated field. Ibn Kammūnah systematically compared the arguments particular to each faith, and elaborated on specific charges made against each religion and the "alleged" responses of each religion's adherents. While the work claimed to represent each dogma fairly and without bias, Ibn Kammūnah's pro-Jewish inclination is clearly evident, especially in his critical remarks on the Muslims.[18] Barbara Roggema observed that the work was animated by Jewish-Muslim rivalry.[19]

Indeed, shortly after its completion, the "Examination" became the cause of much uproar in Baghdad. According to the Ilkhanid Baghdadi chronicle "Al-Ḥawādith al-jāmiʿah," when reports about the book spread through the streets of the city in 1284, a riled-up mass gathered to avenge Islam's reputation and kill the Jewish author. Baghdadi authorities—both religious and civil—assembled at the Mustanṣirīyah madrasah to investigate the controversy and Ibn Kammūnah went into hiding. To appease the agitated crowds, they ordered that he should be burned alive. Hiding inside a coffin, Ibn Kammūnah fled to the Shiʿi center of al-Ḥillah, where his son was a scribe.[20] Ibn Kammūnah's downfall might, how-

[17] On this work: Moshe Perlmann, "The Medieval Polemics between Islam and Judaism," in *Religion in a Religious Age,* ed. S. D. Goitein (New York, 1974), 103–38; Barbara Roggema, "Epistemology as Polemics. Ibn Kammuna's Examination of the Apologetics of the Three Faiths," in *The Three Rings: Textual Studies in the Historical Trialogue of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam,* ed. B. Roggema, M. Poorthuis, and P. Valkenberg (Leuven, 2005), 47–70. For its manuscripts, dating, and its refutations: Pourjavady and Schmidtke, *Jewish Philosopher,* 106–13. For the work's English translation: *Ibn Kammūna's Examination of the Three Faiths: a Thirteenth-Century Essay in the Comparative Study of Religion,* tr. Moshe Perlmann (Berkeley, 1971).

[18] Barbara Roggema notes that the work was "animated by the rivalry between Judaism and Islam." Roggema, "Epistemology as Polemics," 65. On the work's relation to the Islamic (kalām-informed) genre of the "Proofs of Prophethood," see ibid., and idem, "Ibn Kammūna's and Ibn al-ʿIbrī's Responses to Fakhr al-Dīn Rāzī's Proofs of Muḥammad's Prophethood," *Intellectual History of the Islamicate World* 2 (2014): 193–213.

[19] Roggema, "Epistemology as Polemics," 65.

[20] Anonymous, *Kitāb al-ḥawādith li-muʾallif min al-qarn al-thāmin al-hijrī wa-huwa al-kitāb al-musammá wahman bi-al-Ḥawādith al-jāmiʿah wa-al-tajārib al-nāfiʿah,* ed. Bashshār ʿAwwād Maʿrūf (Beirut, 1997), 476–77.

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ever, also have been due to the execution of his chief patron in Baghdad, Shams al-Dīn al-Juwaynī (d. 1284), shortly beforehand.[21]

Schmidtke and Pourjavady suggest that "given the intimate familiarity of Shīrāzī with the oeuvre of Ibn Kammūna," the al-Shīrāzī Codex, which was completed roughly six years after Ibn Kammūnah finished his "Examination," is not only the earliest surviving manuscript of this important work, but also represents its most original version.[22] The al-Shīrāzī Codex seems to have changed ownership early on, as it was also owned by the library of Rashīd al-Dīn. Stamps marking the codex as the property of the Rashīdī library *(waqf-i kitābkhānah-yi Rashīdī)* in Tabriz[23] appear on four separate folios throughout the codex.[24] Al-Shīrāzī seems to have resided in Tabriz from around 1306 until his death in 1311.[25] While it is uncertain when exactly the manuscript passed into Rashīd al-Dīn's possession—that is, whether it was during al-Shīrāzī's period of residence in the city, or only after his death in 1311—the codex provides clear evidence that Rashīd al-Dīn had access to Ibn Kammūnah's "Examination." What, then, did Rashīd al-Dīn know about Ibn Kammūnah? And did he address the Jewish philosopher's anti-Muslim (and anti-Christian) polemical arguments in his own theological and polemical writings, as he had done in the case of the Buddhist monks in the Ilkhanate?[26]

Rashīd al-Dīn and Ibn Kammūnah: Refuting Judaism at the Ilkhanid Court

To the best of my knowledge, Ibn Kammūnah is mentioned only once in Rashīd al-Dīn's theological collections, in a treatise in his "Book of Clarifications."[27] In this instance, Rashīd al-Dīn described a court debate between the Ilkhan Öljeitü

[21] Pourjavady and Schmidtke, *Jewish Philosopher,* 10, 14, 17.

[22] Pourjavady and Schmidtke, "Quṭb al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī (d. 710/1311) Codex," 290.

[23] Ibid., 284–85. On the Rashīdī library stamps on other manuscripts, see for example, Asīd Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ḥakīm, "Sih nuskhah dīgar az Kitābkhānah-yi Rabʿ-i Rashīdī," *Āyinah-yi Pazhūhish* 31, no. 5 (2020–21): 111–31.

[24] Pourjavady and Schmidtke, "Quṭb al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī (d. 710/1311) Codex," 284.

[25] At some point after he departed Maragha, al-Shīrāzī arrived in Anatolia and, after spending some time in Konya, became chief judge of Malaṭya and Siwās. He served as an Ilkhanid emissary to the Mamluks in 1282. After 1290, he moved to Tabriz, where he focused on writing. F. Jamil Ragep, "Shīrāzī: Quṭb al-Dīn Maḥmūd ibn Masʿūd Muṣliḥ al-Shīrāzī," in *The Biographical Encyclopedia of Astronomers,* ed. Thomas Hockey et al. (New York, 2007), 1054–55.

[26] For Rashīd al-Dīn's refutation of Buddhism: Brack, *An Afterlife,* 42–57.

[27] Faḍl Allāh Abū al-Khayr al-Hamadānī Rashīd al-Dīn, *Tawḍīḥāt-i Rashīdī,* ed. Hāshim Rajabzādah (Tehran, 1394 [2015]), 2:759–64. I am grateful to Yusuf Chaudhary for having initially drawn my attention to this reference to Ibn Kammūnah.

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(r. 1304–16) and several scholars attending the court. The discussion revolved around the question of the superiority of reason over transmitted knowledge, a topic that Rashīd al-Dīn revisited often in his theological writings.[28] He frequently depicted such religious and intellectual exchanges at the Ilkhanid court. Many of his treatises start as answers to questions that were presented to him during or following such court settings at the rulers' camps, where Sunni and Shiʿi Muslim scholars, Christians, and Buddhist monks, as well as Mongol kings—Ghazan or, most often, his brother and successor Öljeitü—presented questions and challenges to the vizier Rashīd al-Dīn.[29]

According to Rashīd al-Dīn, the exchange mentioned above took place while he was absent from the court. The discussion started when Öljeitü asserted that the rational individual was superior to the knowledgeable, learned individual. Some scholars disputed the king's observation; they noted that while rational individuals might be preoccupied with matters of the state or "this world," those with knowledge are preoccupied with matters related to religion and salvation, or the "next world," which is superior to this material world. The debate continued for a while until Öljeitü made the comment that "there are no rational individuals who are not Muslim." The scholars responded that all people have some level of "reason," though their capacity for reason varies. Thus, "other religions too have rational individuals, for example, Ibn Kammūnah, who is a knowledgeable and rational individual among the Jewish sect during this age." Öljeitü disagreed with their answer, however, and related it to Rashīd al-Dīn when he arrived at the court during this discussion. Rashīd al-Dīn confirmed the Ilkhan's harsh verdict concerning the Jewish philosopher, saying that if, despite his abundant knowledge and wisdom, Ibn Kammūnah had failed to tell the difference between the true and false religion, and had, therefore, not converted to Islam and saved his soul from the torments of hell, then the Jewish philosopher's reason was lacking. He reinforced this conclusion with hadith and poetry, as he often did in his theological writings.[30]

Rashīd al-Dīn's contempt for Ibn Kammūnah as "irrational" since he did not convert from Judaism to Islam naturally also reaffirmed his own "rational" choice to embrace Islam. Rashīd al-Dīn further noted that, in addition to Ibn Kammūnah's infidelity, the Jewish philosopher increased his misery in hell by brazenly making unsubstantiated accusations against the religion of Islam. Rashīd al-Dīn expressed, therefore, his certainty that Ibn Kammūnah's soul would suffer in hell.[31] His comment here seems to refer to Ibn Kammūnah's "Ex-

[28] Brack, *An Afterlife,* 16–17, 81–85.

[29] Ibid., 14–15.

[30] Rashīd al-Dīn, *Tawḍīḥāt-i Rashīdī,* 2:759–61.

[31] Ibid., 764.

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amination," which, as noted above, had reached his library in Tabriz as part of the al-Shīrāzī Codex (although we are uncertain exactly when).

Rashīd al-Dīn, however, appears to have also engaged with some of the arguments made by Ibn Kammūnah in this work. We find indications of this in his lengthy commentary on Surah 109, "The Unbelievers" *(al-Kāfirūn),* in the "Book of Clarifications." In this surah, which is dated to the Meccan period, the Prophet addresses Mecca's polytheists, arguing that the "unbelievers" and the nascent Muslim community should keep apart in religious matters, declaring "To you your religion, and to me mine" (verse 6). Since the verse does not command the suppression of polytheism, it has been considered as evidence of Islam's tolerant attitude toward the Meccans and forms of polytheism more broadly. The verse was referenced when truces were concluded between Muslims and other parties.[32] Alarmed by the possibility of interpreting 109:6 to mean that the Prophet condoned polytheism, some Muslim exegetes argued that it was meant as a threat rather than implying the Prophet's disposition toward compromise with the Meccans. Others, however, argued that verse 109:6 was abrogated by the Verse of the Sword (*Āyat al-Sayf,* 9:5), which states, "Slay the idolaters, wherever you find them."[33]

Dorothea Krawulsky discussed Rashīd al-Dīn's arguments in this treatise against the abrogation *(naskh)* of 109:6. She situated Rashīd al-Dīn's arguments in the context of his broader opposition to the utilization of the exegetical practice of abrogation of Quranic verses to resolve apparent contradictions within the Quran. Rashīd al-Dīn identified grades of infidelity, arguing that each of the verses—109:6, with its seemingly "tolerant" and amicable attitude toward the infidels, and verse 9:6, with its harsher, more violent message against polytheism—addressed different groups of infidels and types of infidelity and, therefore, related to different situations and moments in the history of the Muslim community. Krawulsky suggested, furthermore, that the treatise's background was the Mongols' conversion to Islam. Rashīd al-Dīn, she concluded, used this discussion to express his belief in employing persuasion instead of force to induce infidel conversion. Reading this treatise as part of Rashīd al-Dīn's defense of the Mongols' conversion to Islam, Krawulsky moreover situated it in relation to other Muslim voices that were critical of the conversion and claimed that the Mongols remained polytheists.

This accusation emerged especially in the Mamluk Sultanate, a major adversary of the Ilkhans. One of its main propagandists, Ibn Taymīyah (d. 728/1328), had accused Rashīd al-Dīn of infidelity, highlighting in this regard Rashīd al-

[32] Yohanan Friedmann, *Tolerance and Coercion in Islam: Interfaith Relations in the Muslim Tradition* (Cambridge, 2003), 88.

[33] Ibid., 95–96.

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Dīn's discussion of Surah 109 and his arguments against its abrogation as proof of his profane views. According to Ibn Taymīyah, Rashīd al-Dīn claimed in this treatise that the Prophet had condoned Judaism and Christianity.[34] It is important to note, however, that Rashīd al-Dīn had not made such a claim; to the contrary, he had argued in the treatise in favor of the Prophet's abrogation *(naskh)* of Christianity and Judaism.[35]

While Krawulsky situated Rashīd al-Dīn's commentary on Surah 109 in relation to the Ilkhanid-Mamluk rivalry, viewing the treatise in the context of religious polemics and interfaith exchanges within the Ilkhanid court, both prior to and following the Ilkhanate's official embrace of Islam under Ghazan (in 1295), and especially in relation to Ibn Kammūnah's religious refutations, sheds new light on this important work. I argue that, rather than defending the converted Mongols from Mamluk jihad, Rashīd al-Dīn's treatise constituted a defense of Islam against polemical arguments presented by religious contenders *inside* the Ilkhanate such as the Ibn Kammūnah. Rashīd al-Dīn was especially committed to fending off any argument against Islam that might weaken the religion's position and standing among his patrons, the recent Mongol converts.

Rashīd al-Dīn not only argued that the "Verse of the Sword" did not abrogate the final verse of "The Unbelievers," but also reinterpreted the "Verse of the Sword" in a more restricted sense. He claimed that it referred to a specific type of infidel *(kāfir):* the polytheist *(mushrik)* who refused to submit to Islam despite multiple pleas and warnings and, moreover, despite being presented ample and decisive evidence of Islam's veracity and the invalidity of his own belief system.[36] Rashīd al-Dīn disputed the abrogation of the final verse of "The Unbelievers" and, more broadly, opposed the practice of abrogation to resolve what appear to be contradictions between verses of the Quran, but he also argued in favor of Islam's abrogation of other religions. Early in the treatise, he stated that while Muslim scholars expressed divergent opinions about abrogation in the scripture, they all agreed about the "absolute *(muṭlaq)* abrogation" (all previous revelations being superseded by Islam), with which "the Jews disagreed."[37] Rashīd al-Dīn extensively addressed this matter. He provided evidence for Islam's abrogation of Judaism and Christianity (not only from the Quran but also from the Old and New Testaments) that he claimed the *ahl al-kitāb* would be unable to deny.[38] In fact, the final third of his lengthy treatise on "The Unbeliev-

[34] Krawulsky, *The Mongol Īlkhāns,* 87–97.

[35] For example, Rashīd al-Dīn, *Tawḍīḥāt-i Rashīdī,* 2:376.

[36] Ibid., 2:386–89.

[37] Ibid, 2:376.

[38] Ibid., 2:380.

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ers" focuses almost entirely on invalidating Judaism (and, to a lesser degree, Christianity) as abrogated religions.[39]

In his chapter on the Jews in the "Examination of the Three Faiths," Ibn Kammūnah responded to arguments about the abrogation of the Torah by other religions. According to Jewish faith, the Torah will not be superseded or abrogated by another religion.[40] Ibn Kammūnah here criticized the Muslims, arguing that Islam had no independent standing without its dogma of the abrogation of Judaism. He stated that "this is the reason the Muslims had to impugn the transmission of the Jews and adopt the tenet of the distortion of the Torah, lest the Torah, including its indications of perpetual validity and non-abrogation, should be binding upon them."[41] In the chapter on Islam, Ibn Kammūnah further highlighted contradictions between verses in the Quran, arguing that "a dissenter can contest any verse with another verse or put on it a construction that will negate the original interpretation." According to Ibn Kammūnah, this raised the possibility that the Quranic revelation was inaccurately transmitted, in obvious contrast to Muslim dogma.[42]

In his treatise on "The Unbelievers," Rashīd al-Dīn presented similar arguments made by a hypothetical opponent. He suggested that this contender might argue, for example, that the practice of *naskh* in the Quran indicated the weakness of the revealed text and Islam's deficiency *(nuqṣān).* Whereas in the case of Judaism and Christianity, their alleged abrogation by Islam took place only after a long period during which their revealed laws were "in effect" and following changes in the circumstances, in the case of abrogation of Quranic verses, the verses were nullified very shortly after they were revealed. Another argument the hypothetical opponent might present, according to Rashīd al-Dīn, is to ask why Jews or Christians must accept the full abrogation of their religions if Muslims accept the validity of their prophets and revelations, and moreover, acknowledge the possibility of voiding certain verses or laws, instead of annulling entire religions.[43]

Interestingly, one of the main points of Jewish-Muslim contention in both Rashīd al-Dīn's and Ibn Kammūnah's work on this subject, was the question of anthropomorphism, with each side simultaneously accusing the other religion

[39] Ibid., 2:426–55.

[40] Ibn Kammūnah, *Saʿd b. Manṣūr ibn Kammūna's Examination of the Inquiries into the Three Faiths: A Thirteenth-Century Essay in Comparative Religion,* ed. Moshe Perlmann (Berkeley, 1967), 27, 45; Ibn Kammūnah, *Ibn Kammūna's Examination* (tr. Perlmann), 47, 70.

[41] Ibn Kammūnah, *Examination,* 49; idem, *Ibn Kammūna's Examination* (tr. Perlmann), 76; Roggema, "Epistemology as Polemics," 65–66.

[42] Ibn Kammūnah, *Examination,* 71–72; idem, *Ibn Kammūna's Examination* (tr. Perlmann), 106–8.

[43] Rashīd al-Dīn, *Tawḍīḥāt-i Rashīdī,* 2:428.

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and its scriptures of entertaining anthropomorphist exaggerations while fending off similar accusations from the opposing party. Ibn Kammūnah presented and answered the accusations against the Torah, noting that Jewish scripture forbids anthropomorphism.[44] In fact, he argued that the essence of Judaism is "the denial of anthropomorphism *(tashbīh)*" and that Muslim scriptures and traditions contained far greater numbers of more definitive anthropomorphist expressions than Jewish scriptures.[45] One of the main cases of anthropomorphism in the Torah addressed by Ibn Kammūnah is the passage about Moses's ascension to Mount Sinai with the elders and being granted sight of God. Ibn Kammūnah explained that Moses and the elders beheld God not in a normal sense but as if in a dream, through the internal eye (which he defined as the imagining power that serves the rational capacity).[46]

From Rashīd al-Dīn's perspective, the question of whether Moses was granted the sight of the divine bore additional significance. As elsewhere in his theological writings, in his treatise on "The Unbelievers" he was invested in promoting the Prophet Muhammad's superior standing in comparison to other prophets, particularly Moses. Muḥammad's heavenly ascension *(miʿrāj)*[47] and his sight of God was a focal point in this regard. Rashīd al-Dīn argued, supposedly in contrast to a common Jewish view, that although Moses was granted the high prophetic rank of conversing with God, he was denied the sight of God, which *was* granted to Muḥammad. This indicated that Muḥammad had ascended beyond any rank of human and prophetic perfection.[48] Rashīd al-Dīn provided evidence that Moses was denied the sight of God from both the Quran and the Torah.[49]

The vizier also addressed the issue of anthropomorphism, specifically regarding Muḥammad's sight of God. He set out the divergent Muslim approaches to this issue, from the views of the traditionalists to those of the *mutakallimūn,*

[44] Ibn Kammūnah, *Examination,* 33–35; idem, *Ibn Kammūna's Examination* (tr. Perlmann), 54–57.

[45] Furthermore, he argues that the Jews interpreted such expressions in a far less literal way than the Muslims, some of whom believed the most literal meanings of anthropomorphist verses in the Quran. Ibn Kammūnah, *Examination,* 99–100; idem, *Ibn Kammūna's Examination* (tr. Perlmann), 145–46.

[46] Ibn Kammūnah, *Examination,* 35–36; idem, *Ibn Kammūna's Examination* (tr. Perlmann), 55. The miracles performed by Moses receive special attention in the work: Roggema, "Epistemology as Polemics," 63.

[47] On the Prophet's ascension and its central place in the vizier's writings, see Brack, *An Afterlife,* 53, 77, 83, 88.

[48] Rashīd al-Dīn, *Tawḍīḥāt-i Rashīdī,* 2:394, 413. The discussion starts with the vizier's interpretation of verse 109:3: "Neither do you worship Him Whom I worship." He argues that the verse reaffirmed the idea that the Prophet's own worship diverges from and supersedes all the other prophets that came before him. Ibid., 2:392.

[49] Ibid., 2:411–12.

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aiming to present a compromise *(tawfīq)* between those who claimed such sight was impossible and those who held a literal understanding of the relevant verses in the Quran.[50] He attempted to resolve this argument by explaining that the Prophet had seen God through a special form of non-physical sight or perception, the "eye of wisdom" *(chashm-i dānish),* which he compared to a state of dreaming, like Ibn Kammūnah had done.[51]

That Rashīd al-Dīn's anti-Jewish apologetics in this treatise were focused on demonstrating Muḥammad's superiority to Moses as a prophet is also related to Ibn Kammūnah's "Examination." While Ibn Kammūnah's general discussion of prophecy draws on a variety of Muslim and Jewish thinkers, including Avicenna, al-Ghazzālī, and Maimonides, his chapter on the Muslim dogma of prophecy relies heavily on, and disputes, the twelfth-century Ashʿarite theologian and exegete Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 1210),[52] who infused his studies on *kalām* with Avicennian philosophical concepts.[53] Under Ilkhanid rule, al-Rāzī's influence transgressed sectarian and confessional boundaries, inviting the responses of Jewish and Syriac Christian authors as well.[54] His works further

[50] Ibid., 2:416–26. The discussion revolves around the divergent interpretations of *ḥadīth al-ruʾyā* (beatific vision in the afterlife). On the hadith and divergent versions, see: Livnat Holtzman, *Anthropomorphism in Islam: The Challenge of Traditionalism (700–1350)* (Edinburgh, 2018), 28–29, 33–38, 68–119. Regarding the vizier's attempt to avoid scholarly disagreements by reconciling and harmonizing *(muwāfaqah, ṣulḥ)* a range of oppositional religious doctrines, schools, and views, see Brack, *An Afterlife,* 110–11; Robert Wisnovsky, "Avicennism and Exegetical Practice in the Early Commentaries on the Ishārāt," *Oriens* 14 (2013): 349–78; Felix Klein-Franke, "Rashīd al-Dīn's Treatise 'On Free Will and Predestination': An Attempt to Overcome Inner-Islamic Differences," *Le Muséon* 117, nos. 3–4 (2004): 527–45.

[51] Rashīd al-Dīn, *Tawḍīḥāt-i Rashīdī,* 2:403–4, 416–18, 422–23. One of the main points he makes regarding this aptitude that appears in different capacities among humankind is the speed with which the eye of knowledge perceives certain insights. The incapable individual, he explains, would not be able to grasp, even given a thousand years, what the knowledgeable individual can gain within a single day using the eye of knowledge.

[52] Roggema, "Ibn Kammūna's and Ibn al-ʿIbrī's Responses," 200–1; idem, "Epistemology as Polemics," 52.

[53] See: Gerhard Endress, "Reading Avicenna in the Madrasa: Intellectual Genealogies in the Chains of Transmission of Philosophy and the Sciences in the Islamic East" in *Arabic Theology, Arabic Philosophy: From the Many to the One: Essays in Honour of Richard M. Frank,* ed. James E. Montgomery (Leuven, 2006), 397; Ayman Shihadeh, *The Teleological Ethics of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī* (Leiden, 2006); idem, "From al-Ghazālī to al-Rāzī: 6th/12th Century Developments in Muslim Philosophical Theology," *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 15 (2005): 70–77; Tariq Jaffer, *Rāzī: Master of Qurʾānic Interpretation and Theological Reasoning* (Oxford, 2015), 68–69; Heidrun Eichner, "The Post-Avicennian Philosophical Tradition and Islamic Orthodoxy: Philosophical and Theological Summae in Context" (habilitation thesis, Halle, 2009).

[54] For al-Rāzī's influence on Shiʿi authors: Sabine Schmidtke, *The Theology of al-ʿAllāma al-Ḥillī (d. 726/1325)* (Berlin, 1991). On West Syrian (Jacobite) Christian theology: Hidemi Takahashi, "Re-

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shaped the interreligious polemics and apologetics of the thirteenth century.[55] Ibn Kammūnah's chapter on Islam is aimed largely at refuting al-Rāzī's proofs of Muḥammad's prophethood and arguments on Muḥammad's abrogation of all previous religions.[56]

Regarding Judaism specifically, al-Rāzī accused the Jews of belonging to "the religion of anthropomorphism *(tashbīh),* making forgeries, and propagating lies," accusations that Ibn Kammūnah addressed head-on in his "Examination" (above). Al-Rāzī further argued that Moses's prophetic mission *(daʿwah)* was particular and thus limited to the Israelites, unlike Muḥammad's universal revelation.[57] Rashīd al-Dīn makes a similar argument concerning Jewish particularism as proof of the inferiority of Judaism. In one instance in the treatise on "The Unbelievers," he compares Muḥammad's universal mission to Moses's mission to one of "the tiniest groups of people in the world" and proceeds to suggest that the fact that Mongols converted to Islam under the Ilkhan Ghazan in far greater numbers ("ten times more") than the Children of Israel embraced Judaism is proof that Muḥammad's revelation supersedes that of Moses.[58]

Intellectual engagement with al-Rāzī's oeuvre likewise flourished in the court-sponsored intellectual centers of the Ilkhanate during Rashīd al-Dīn's tenure.[59] Al-Rāzī's reformulation of an Avicennized *kalām* formed the basis of much of Rashīd al-Dīn's theological thought. He innovatively experimented with al-Rāzī's appropriation of Avicennian principles for his theory of the prophetic hierarchy of ethical-intellectual perfection as the basis for a new political theology of Islamic-Chinggisid sacral kingship.[60] This hierarchical model of human souls also came under Ibn Kammūnah's scrutiny. He argued that al-Rāzī's division of mankind into commoners, saints, and prophets omitted the learned, and

ception of Islamic Theology among Syriac Christians in the Thirteenth Century: The Use of Fakhr al-Dīn Rāzī in Barhebraeus' *Candelabrum of the Sanctuary,*" *Intellectual History of the Islamicate World* 2 (2014): 170–92; Bert Jacobs, "Unveiling Christ in the Islamicate World: Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's Prophetology as a Model for Christian Apologetics in Gregory Bar ʿEbrōyō's Treatise on the Incarnation," *Intellectual History of the Islamicate World* 6 (2018): 187–216.

[55] Roggema, "Ibn Kammūna's and Ibn al-ʿIbrī's Responses"; Salam Rassi, *Christian Thought in the Medieval Islamicate World: ʿAbdīshoʿ of Nisbis and the Apologetic Tradition* (Oxford, 2022), 84–89.

[56] Roggema, "Ibn Kammūna's and Ibn al-ʿIbrī's responses," 203.

[57] For al-Rāzī's discussion of *naskh,* see, for example: Fakhr al-Dīn Muḥammad Ibn ʿUmar al-Rāzī, *Al-Maṭālib al-ʿāliyah* (Beirut, 1987), 8:121–22.

[58] Rashīd al-Dīn, *Tawḍīḥāt-i Rashīdī,* 2:453.

[59] Bruno de Nicola, "The 'Kāmūsī Corpus': A Case Study in Manuscript Production and Knowledge Transmission in Ilkhanid Iran," *Iranian Studies* 55 (2022): 439–61.

[60] Brack, *An Afterlife,* 16–17, 81–84, 88.

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it was the learned, not the prophets, who, according to Ibn Kammūnah, were the verifiers *(muḥaqqiq)* who perfected the souls of the commoners.[61]

Considering Rashīd al-Dīn's own reliance on al-Rāzī, we should consider the possibility that he had engaged with Ibn Kammūnah's work to provide a rebuttal of his robust criticism of al-Rāzī.[62] Rashīd al-Dīn, however, might have also learned from Ibn Kammūnah's arguments, just as the latter had based his discussion of Islam on al-Rāzī's work. For example, Ibn Kammūnah explained that "the idolaters . . . feel that idol worship brings one closer to God."[63] And Rashīd al-Dīn similarly stated that polytheists could claim that their belief was not idol worship and that they acknowledged the one God but used their worship of idols to come closer to this one true God.[64] For Ibn Kammūnah, however, this example demonstrated the proximity between idolatry and Islamic modes of worship, specifically the Muslim rituals revolving around the Black Stone in the Kaʿbah. Rashīd al-Dīn, on the other hand, used this example for an entirely different end: to further reduce the "pool" of idol worshippers to which the "Verse of the Sword" is applicable. He sought to argue that, in contrast to the critical remarks made against Muslim dogma, Muslims are commanded to use force to convert only in the rarest instances.[65]

Rashīd al-Dīn's interpretation of the two verses and his discussion of the issue of abrogation furthermore relate to the interfaith debates that were carried out at the Mongol courts, and specifically to the strategies employed by religious agents to gain favor with the khans while presenting competing religions in a negative light. The question whether the Prophet Muḥammad had called to violently oppress the idolaters seems to have been a topic vividly debated at the Ilkhanid court. Buddhist monks involved in the inter-religious interactions at the Ilkhan Arghun's court during the 1280s used this argument to present Islam as inimical to the Mongols' religious pluralism and thus to Chinggis Khan's example. They deployed these and other arguments to cultivate anti-Muslim sentiment and reinforce Buddhism as the religion best fitted to accommodate the Mongols' perspective.[66]

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[61] Ibn Kammūnah, *Examination,* 99; idem, *Ibn Kammūna's Examination* (tr. Perlmann), 145.

[62] The vizier refers to al-Rāzī's Quranic commentary, *Al-Tafsīr al-kabīr,* throughout his treatise on "The Unbelievers": Rashīd al-Dīn, *Tawḍīḥāt-i Rashīdī,* 2:372, 375, 378–79.

[63] Ibn Kammūnah, *Examination,* 101–2; idem, *Ibn Kammūna's Examination* (tr. Perlmann), 148.

[64] Rashīd al-Dīn, *Tawḍīḥāt-i Rashīdī,* 2:389.

[65] Ibid.

[66] Jonathan Brack, "Chinggisid Pluralism and Religious Competition: Buddhists, Muslims, and the Question of Violence and Sovereignty in Ilkhanid Iran," *Modern Asian Studies* 56 (2022): 815–39.

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According to Rashīd al-Dīn's *Jāmiʿ al-tawārīkh*, similar strategies were used at the court of the Great Khan Qubilai (r. 1260–94) in China. The vizier writes that the Christian (probably Syrian) party at the Yuan court attempted to turn Qubilai against the Muslims and enrage the ruler by referring him to the "Verse of the Sword" and its call for the Muslims to kill all polytheists. The Christians told him that they had learned about this verse from a letter from the Ilkhan Abaqa (r. 1265–82) in Iran. According to the account, Qubilai was enraged by this information and discussed the existence of the verse with several Muslim scholars. However, one scholar who was summoned to court to address the ruler's concerns managed to save the Muslims from his wrath by claiming that Qubilai and the Mongols were not polytheists since they acknowledged the one God *(khudā)* and invoked his name on their edicts.[67]

Rashīd al-Dīn's Continuation of "The Unbelievers"

The transition of Rashīd al-Dīn's treatise on "The Unbelievers" from a *tafsīr*-oriented work to an anti-Jewish apologetic comes full circle in the work's *dhayl,* its follow-up treatise in the "Book of Clarifications." There the vizier seeks to refute Judaism by providing evidence from the Jewish scriptures, including verses from the Torah. According to the preface to the *dhayl*, he had planned to have the verses appear in Hebrew script first, then transliterated into Arabic script, and finally in a literal ("word for word") translation into Persian.[68] As far as I can tell, no surviving manuscript includes the Hebrew script, but some manuscripts do retain the transliterated verses alongside their literal translations.[69] Rashīd al-Dīn not only interpreted these verses but also explained Jewish traditions and key concepts such as *gematria* and *shmita*.[70]

[67] Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmiʿ al-tawārīkh,* ed. Muḥammad Rawshan and Muṣṭafá Mūsavī (Tehran, 1373/1994), 2:922–23; idem, *Rashiduddin Fazlullah's Jamiʿu't-Tawarikh: A History of the Mongols,* trans. W. M. Thackston (Cambridge, 1998–99), 3:452.

[68] Rashīd al-Dīn, *Tawḍīḥāt-i Rashīdī,* 2:457–508.

[69] The Tehran Golestan manuscript of the "Rashidi Collection" *(Majmūʿah Rashīdīyah)*—the main copy used for the modern edition of the *Tawḍīḥāt-i Rashīdī* (published in 2015), dated to Dhū al-Qaʿdah 708/1309, i.e., shortly after the composition of the treatises—provides the Hebrew verses in transliteration and translation, but not the original Hebrew (Tehran Golestan MS 2235, pp. 116–32/fols. 69r–77r). The Arabic version of the *Majmūʿah,* on the other hand (Bibliothèque nationale de France MS arabe 2324, fols. 111r–117v), has only the translation (into Arabic).

[70] *Gematria* (from Gr. γεωμετρία) is the computation of individual letters, words, or entire sentences utilizing their numerical equivalence (each of the 22 letters in the Hebrew alphabet is correlated with a specific number). *Shmita* is the seventh year of the agricultural cycle, when the farmer must leave his land to lie fallow without plowing or harvesting.

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While it is clear that the treatise's author or the scribe had difficulty transcribing the Hebrew verses into Persian/Arabic script—which may be interpreted in several ways[71]—overall the author's engagement with Jewish tradition and his understanding of biblical verses is strongly indicative of an individual with a rich background in Judaism and a deep acquaintance with key Jewish concepts.[72] The vizier's main arguments against the Jewish faith are familiar from earlier polemical works. They fall roughly into three types: first, that the Jews—specifically the Prophet Ezra/ʿUzayr—falsified the Torah; second, there was internal evidence in the biblical text that predicted the Prophet Muḥammad's arrival; and, finally, that the Jews themselves had negated and abrogated certain edicts from God's word, proving that the Torah had been nullified, an argument which Ibn Kammūnah addressed as well (above).

Rashīd al-Dīn took full credit for the idea of including verses directly from the Torah. He claimed that he was the first author to incorporate Hebrew verses to refute Judaism and convince the Jews to convert to Islam.[73] Not only is this statement not true, but, in fact, he likely had an example in front of him. The al-Shīrāzī Codex—which includes Ibn Kammūnah's "Examination" and was in the possession of Rashīd al-Dīn's library in Tabriz—also included a copy of "Ifḥām al-yahūd," the refutation of Judaism by Samawʾal al-Maghribī. This refutation, which, moreover, appeared after Ibn Kammūnah's "Examination" in the manuscript, also included verses in Hebrew script: the codex copied by hand by al-Shīrāzī in 685/1286 (Marʿashī MS 12868) presents these verses that were written by someone skilled in writing the Hebrew script.[74] Rashīd al-Dīn's *dhayl* to the

[71] The verses may have been read aloud by an individaul versed in Hebrew but written down by a Persian scribe (from hearing) with no knowledge of Hebrew. Therefore, the scribe had difficulty distinguishing the words in each verse properly (among other issues with the transcription). Another option is that we are dealing with a single individual who had memorized the verses (or had read the verses via a transliterated version) but had a limited understanding of written Hebrew and was non-conversant in Hebrew. This option could fit what we know about Rashīd al-Dīn. One more option is that the verses were corrupted by the copyist of the treatise.

[72] Judith Pfeiffer, on the other hand, expressed her doubts about Rashīd al-Dīn's knowledge of Jewish traditions and Hebrew, arguing that his views on Jewish chronology in the Israelite chapter in the vizier's world history were "neither special nor new among Muslim scholars by his time." Judith Pfeiffer, "In the Folds of Time: Rashīd al-Dīn on the Theories of Historicity," *History and Theory* 57 (2019): 32.

[73] Rashīd al-Dīn, *Tawḍīḥāt-i Rashīdī,* 2:458.

[74] It is unlikely that al-Shīrāzī knew Hebrew, and more plausible that he asked a Jew to fill out the space left for the quotations after completion of the manuscript. Pourjavady and Schmidtke further note that later sources claim that al-Shīrāzī had dwelt for a certain period among Jews. Pourjavady and Schmidtke, "Quṭb al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī (d. 710/1311) Codex," 293–98. Ibn Kammūnah relied on "Ifḥām al-yahūd" in his chapter on Judaism. Roggema, "Epistemology as Polemics," 65.

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treatise on "The Unbelievers" may have constituted his attempt to author his own version of "Ifḥām al-yahūd" without acknowledging earlier precedents of such refutations by Jewish converts to Islam.

Not everyone was pleased with Rashīd al-Dīn's discussion of abrogation in his treatise on "The Unbelievers." According to another of his writings titled "The States of the Haters and Slanderers," his "Book of Clarifications" was favorably accepted and acclaimed by all the scholars of Tabriz except for one preacher. In "The States of the Haters and Slanderers," Rashīd al-Dīn writes that since the scholarly community of Tabriz had a favorable reputation for respectfully providing valuable and beneficial feedback to its members, he had his "Book of Clarifications" sent to all the famous scholars of the city along with a personal letter asking them to review the work in detail and identify mistakes so he could correct them. According to Rashīd al-Dīn, each of the scholars who read the "Book of Clarifications" commended it, encouraging the vizier to continue with his theological inquiries. Moreover, without his having had to request it, each of them recorded lavish praise of him in writing, demonstrating their commitment to siding with Rashīd al-Dīn.[75]

Among the scholars, however, there was an unidentified preacher (to whom Rashīd al-Dīn assigns degrading epithets such as hypocrite, envious, and demagogue), who, despite having initially exalted him in the company of other dignitaries, started spreading vicious lies about him. This preacher accused Rashīd al-Dīn (and his supporters in the religious community) of infidelity, initially hiding behind others but subsequently voicing his opposition to Rashīd al-Dīn openly, using his access to the pulpits of Tabriz.[76] While Rashīd al-Dīn did not name him, the individual seems to be Tāj al-Dīn al-Afḍalī (d. 718/19), whom Mamluk authors identified as a well-known preacher from Tabriz, and who was also an ardent critic of Rashīd al-Dīn. According to Mamluk accounts, al-Afḍalī accused Rashīd al-Dīn of falsifying the Quran in favor of his Jewish faith, then went into hiding fearing his vengeance.[77] If al-Afḍalī was indeed the Tabrizi nemesis in Rashīd al-Dīn's account, it appears that he was especially enraged by Rashīd al-Dīn's approach to the question of the abrogation of verse 109:6.

In "The States of the Haters and Slanderers," Rashīd al-Dīn explained that such detractors were bound to arise because of his prominence at court. He drew a comparison between himself and the earlier theologians al-Ghazzālī (d.

[75] Rashīd al-Dīn, *Tawḍīḥāt-i Rashīdī,* 2:509–85.

[76] Ibid., 521–22.

[77] Krawulsky, *The Mongol Īlkhāns,* 90, 113; Amitai-Preiss, "New Material," 32. According to al-Ṣafadī, al-Afḍalī hid from the vizier until someone interceded for him with the vizier and the latter sought to appease al-Afḍalī. Al-Afḍalī, however, continued to loathe Rashīd al-Dīn. Al-Ṣafadī, *Aʿyān al-ʿaṣr,* 4:42–44.

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1111) and al-Rāzī (d. 1209), who, he notes, despite suffering similar attacks, were considered among the most important Muslim scholars. To resolve the dispute with al-Afḍalī, a fatwa addressing the permissibility of holding various attitudes regarding the abrogation of verse 109:6 and countering the accusation of infidelity against Rashīd al-Dīn was requested on behalf of Rashīd al-Dīn. In "The States of the Haters and Slanderers," Rashīd al-Dīn provided both the *istiftāʾ* and the rulings/fatwas that were written by twenty-five of the chief religious scholars throughout the Ilkhanate, from Tabriz to Yazd and Shiraz, all reporting to have examined his treatise on "The Unbelievers" in much detail.[78] The fatwas unanimously *(ijmāʾ)* confirmed his discussion of the question of *naskh* in the case of Surah 109 and declared the preacher an apostate *(murtadd)* and infidel for making such vile accusations against Rashīd al-Dīn despite his great efforts to refute Judaism, Christianity, and the Buddhist belief in reincarnation.[79]

Al-Afḍalī's assault on Rashīd al-Dīn may have also motivated him to add the "endorsements" *(taqrīẓāt)* that the scholars had written earlier for his "Book of Clarifications" (by their own volition, as Rashīd al-Dīn stresses) in later copies of his work. As we noted at the start of this paper, the first two endorsements in these affirmations were penned by the Ilkhanid polymath al-Shīrāzī, from whom Rashīd al-Dīn seems to have also gained a copy of Ibn Kammūnah's refutations.

Conclusion

In one of his recent contributions, Amitai suggested that Rashīd al-Dīn's liminal position at "the meeting place between Islamic Iran, the Mongol Empire and his own Jewish background" contributed to his openness and cultural curiosity, making him the closest we have to an Ilkhanid-era "cosmopolitan intellectual."[80] Earlier scholarship has also connected the vizier's background as a convert from Judaism to the inclusion of a separate chapter on the history of the "Children of Israel" *(Banī Isrāʾīl),* based almost exclusively on Jewish—biblical and rabbinic—sources, in his world history, The "Compendium of Chronicles" *(Jāmiʿ al-tawārīkh).*[81] Art historians have similarly attributed some of the picto-

[78] Rashīd al-Dīn, *Tawḍīḥāt-i Rashīdī,* 2:525–40.

[79] Ibid., 517, 524–25, 542.

[80] Amitai, "Jews at the Mongol Court in Iran," 44.

[81] For the Israelite chapter: Karl Jahn, *Die Geschichte der Kinder Israels des Rašīd ad-Dīn: Einleitung, Übersetzung, Kommentar und Texttafeln* (Vienna, 1973). On the chapter as an indication of the vizier's Jewish background, see also: Charles Melville, "Jāmeʿ al-Tawārik̲," *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (2008), 14:462–68. This commonly held view that Rashīd al-Dīn's Jewish background and education informed his inclusion of the Israelite chapter has, however, been recently challenged. New research on the "Compendium"'s authorship has shown that Rashīd al-Dīn borrowed ex-

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rial choices in the illustrations of the "Compendium," specifically the emphasis on biblical themes, to Rashīd al-Dīn's religious background.[82]

Rashīd al-Dīn's treatises discussing theology and Quranic commentary present a different aspect of his multifaceted engagement with his Jewish heritage. While he was likely motivated by his wish to distance himself from this background and reaffirm his commitment to Islam, his efforts to refute the Jewish faith seem to have had the opposite result, underscoring instead his position as a convert and providing his adversaries with leverage against him. Part of this appears to have resulted from his discussion of the question of abrogation in the Quran, in which he attempted to defend Islam from polemical arguments presented by religious contenders such as the Jewish philosopher Ibn Kammūnah. His discussion of the question of the abrogation of the final verse of "The Unbelievers" (109:6) seems to have also been part of an attempt to offer an interpretation of Muslim dogma that could be reconciled with the worldview of his Mongol overlords, particularly the Chinggisid principle of religious pluralism. Thus, he sought to fend off any attempt to undermine his Mongol patrons' commitment to their new faith by depicting Islamic law as incongruent with Chinggisid tradition. This might explain Rashīd al-Dīn's great frustration with critics who accused him of infidelity due to his discussion of abrogation. He aired this frustration in his treatise on "The States of the Haters and Slanderers."

Rashīd al-Dīn situated his anti-Jewish apologetics alongside his other polemical treatises against the Buddhist dogma of reincarnation and the Christian trinity, suggesting that he considered himself to be engaging in a broader and more ambitious endeavor of defending Islam in the competitive religious arena of the Ilkhanid court.[83] One aspect of this religious arena related to the circulation of religious polemical works between Ilkhanid scholars and to and from the Ilkhanid court. The transfer of Ibn Kammūnah's "Examination of the Three Faiths"—as part of the codex copied by the Muslim scholar al-Shīrāzī—into Rashīd al-Dīn's library and his (likely subsequent) response to the Jewish

tensively, often with only minor changes, from another, Shiʿi author, ʿAbd Allāh Qāshānī, for the "Compendium"'s second volume—the world history. This includes the Israelite chapter as well. See Osamu Otsuka, "Qāshānī, the First World Historian: Research on his Uninvestigated Persian General History, *Zubdat al-tawārīkh,*" *Studia Iranica* 47 (2018): 119–49; and Kamola, *Making Mongol History,* 95–103.

[82] Natif argued that the paintings maintain a connection to biblical source materials, and Hillenbrand linked the attention to biblical themes to Rashīd al-Dīn's Jewish heritage. Mika Natif, "Rashīd al-Dīn's Alter Ego: The Seven Paintings of Moses in the *Jāmiʿ al-tawārīkh,*" in *Rashīd al-Dīn: Agent and Mediator,* ed. Akasoy et al., 15–37; Robert Hillenbrand, "The Arts of the Book in Ilkhanid Iran," in *The Legacy of Genghis Khan: Courtly Art and Culture in Western Asia, 1256–1353,* ed. Linda Komaroff and Stefano Carboni (New Haven, 2002), 135–67.

[83] Rashīd al-Dīn, *Tawḍīḥāt-i Rashīdī,* 2:555–56.

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philosopher's arguments, demonstrate how polemical tracts circulated across religious boundaries and triggered responses and engagement. It further shows that the Mongol court in Iran formed an important node within the wider network of inter-religious exchange.

Another dimension of this competitive religious arena was the interfaith debate at the Ilkhanid court. The Mongol rulers were keen on orchestrating inter-religious disputations.[84] While Ilkhanid sources mostly record debates between Buddhists and Muslims or between Shiʿis and Sunnis,[85] there are also indications that Jews participated, or were at least present, at these interfaith exchanges.[86] In this regard, Rashīd al-Dīn's anti-Jewish apologetics represent the continuation of the culture of interfaith exchange and disputation under Mongol rule that included Jews and Judaism alongside Islam and Buddhism.

Postscript

Tzvi Langermann's important summary and discussion of Rashīd al-Dīn's continuation *(dhayl)* for "The Unbelievers" (based on the Arabic translation of the Persian text) was published in *Religions* shortly after the revisions for this article were completed.[87] On the question of the relationship between Samawʾal al-Maghribī's *Ifḥām al-yahūd* and Rashīd al-Dīn's work, Langermann saw "no direct connection between Samawʾal's tract" and the vizier's treatise.[88] After completing my article, I found indications that Rashīd al-Dīn did rely on *Ifḥām al-yahūd*. This supports the argument that for his refutations of Judaism and the Torah, Rashīd al-Dīn consulted Marʿashī MS 12868, which includes both Ibn Kammūnah's *Tanqīḥ* and *Ifḥām al-yahūd* and bears the stamps of the Rashīdī library.

[84] George Lane, "Intellectual Jousting and the Chinggisid Wisdom Bazaars," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 26 (2016): 235–47; Jonathan Brack, "Disenchanting Heaven: Interfaith Debate, Sacral Kingship, and Conversion to Islam in the Mongol Empire, 1260–1335," *Past & Present* 250 (2021): 11–53.

[85] Brack, *An Afterlife*.

[86] The Sufi shaykh Simnānī (d. 1336), for example, described his conversations with an unidentified Jewish ascetic rabbi whom the Ilkhan Arghun (r. 1284–91), an avid supporter of Buddhism, greatly respected. Devin DeWeese, "'Alāʾ al-Dawla Simnānī's Religious Encounters at the Mongol Court Near Tabriz," in *Politics, Patronage and the Transmission of Knowledge in 13th–15th century Tabriz,* ed. Judith Pfeiffer (Leiden, 2014), 35–76. And the Jewish vizier Saʿd al-Dawlah (d. 1291) used these debates between Buddhists and Muslims to convince Arghun to embrace a new policy. Brack, "Chinggisid Pluralism," 832–34.

[87] Y. Tzvi Langermann, "*Naskh* ('Abrogation') in Muslim Anti-Jewish Polemic: The Treatise of Rashīd al-Dīn Hamadanī (1247–1318)," *Religions* 15, no. 5 (2024): 1–13.

[88] Ibid., 4.

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The evidence is found in Samawʾal's discussion of the allusions in the Jewish scripture to the Prophet Muḥammad and parallel sections in Rashīd al-Dīn's treatises. Samawʾal deduces from Deuteronomy 2:4 ("You are about to travel through the territory of your brothers, the descendants of Esau, who live in Seir") that the "brothers" in Deuteronomy 18:15 ("The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers") allude to the children of Esau, the Ishmaelites, and thus this verse anticipates the rise of the Prophet Muḥammad among the Ishmaelites.[89] While earlier Muslim authors referenced Deuteronomy 18:15 in arguing that the Torah alludes to Muḥammad, Samawʾal appears to have been the first to use Deuteronomy 2:4 to further support this argument and refute Jewish counterarguments.[90] On two separate occasions in his treatises, Rashīd al-Dīn makes the same argument as Samawʾal based on the same two verses from Deuteronomy.[91] Furthermore, like Samawʾal, Rashīd al-Dīn too follows this with additional evidence from Genesis 17:20. *Gematria,* the practice of assigning numerical value to a letter, name, or word, is used by both Samawʾal and Rashīd al-Dīn to interpret the Hebrew term *bi-me'od me'od* ("exceedingly," equivalent to the number ninety-two) as an allusion to Muhammad's name.[92] It seems, therefore, safe to conclude that Rashīd al-Dīn used Marʿashī MS 12868 and that Ibn Kammūnah's *Tanqīḥ* and Samawʾal's *Ifḥām al-yahūd* both influenced his decision to write polemical tracts against the Jews.

[89] See Moshe Perlmann, ed. and trans., "Samauʾal Al-Maghribī: Ifḥām Al-Yahūd: Silencing the Jews," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 32 (1964): 45 (translation), 29–31 (Arabic).

[90] Haggai Mazuz, "The Identity of the Apostate in the Epistle of Yemen," *AJS Review* 38, no. 2 (2014): 367.

[91] Rashīd al-Dīn's presentation here is more detailed than Samawʾal's; in fact, he seems to slightly elaborate the argument, adding Deuteronomy 34:10 ("And there has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like Moses") to the discussion and explaining why Deuteronomy 18:18 cannot refer to Jesus. Rashīd al-Dīn, *Tawḍīḥāt-i Rashīdī,* 2:430–33, 482–86.

[92] Mazuz, "The Identity," 368–69; Perlmann, "Samauʾal Al-Maghribī," 46–47 (translation), 31–34 (Arabic); Rashīd al-Dīn, *Tawḍīḥāt-i Rashīdī,* 2:486–87.

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