

# Rashīd al-Dīn’s Delineation of Chinese Voices and Letters in His *Tānksūqnāma*

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## Abstract

The discussion of this paper revolves around Rashīd al-Dīn’s (1249–1318)—a vizier of the Ilkhanid dynasty (ca. 1256–1357)—strong concern with Chinese sounds/voices and letters in his translation work, *Tānksūqnāma*. He even sometimes made use of newly-invented “Persian” letters, in order to precisely represent Chinese sounds. From the macro perspective, Rashīd al-Dīn’s such concern can be understood in line with his intention to integrate two Eurasian scientific traditions. On the other hand, however, we should also situate his immense interest in Chinese voices and letters in the micro perspective—in the Ilkhanid context. The Ilkhanid translation project initiated by Rashīd al-Dīn, in which *Tānksūqnāma* was expected to be produced, was actually part of his larger-scale compilation of his complete works including the *Jāmi‘ al-Tawārīkh*, a world history. In compiling the world history, Rashīd al-Dīn turned his attention toward the way of the transmission of knowledge—especially history—in each nation. In fact, the contents of the introduction of the History of China in the world history mainly deal with the Chinese way of transmitting knowledge including Chinese characters, which is also found in the introduction of the *Tānksūqnāma*. Rashīd al-Dīn’s delineation of Chinese voices and letters in his *Tānksūqnāma*, therefore, came out both of the macro and micro perspectives in the period of the Mongol empire.