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Rendering External Knowledge into Internal Politics: Rashīd al-Dīn's "Encyclopaedia Sinica" in the Tānksūqnāma

This paper aims at elucidating the significance of migrating Chinese knowledge into the politics of the Ilkhanate (ca. 1256–after 1335). For this purpose, I contextualize the Tānksūqnāma-yi Īlkhān dar Funūn-i 'Ulūm-i Khitā'ī [Treasure Book of the Ilkhan on the Chinese Arts and Sciences]—the main product of the Chinese-into-Persian translation project by Rashīd al-Dīn (1249–1318)—in his broader compilation for the Jāmi' al-taṣānīf-i rashīdī [Collected Works of Rashīd al-Dīn]. In particular, the long introduction of the Tānksūqnāma comes under scrutiny through comparison with Rashīd al-Dīn's historical and theological works including his collection. The introduction takes shape as "Encyclopaedia Sinica," dealing with wide-ranging Chinese knowledge. In comparing with the History of China in the Jāmi' al-tawārīkh [The Collected Histories], Rashīd al-Dīn's coherent interest in "methods to transmit knowledge" comes into appearance on the grounds of the principle of his historical writing. I also relate the Encyclopaedia Sinica with a series of theological works by Rashīd al-Dīn to position the Ilkhanate translation project in his politico-theological thought especially for the time of Öljeitü (r. 1304–1316). It leads us to reconsider the accepted view that the Tānksūqnāma was compiled in the reign of Ghazan (r. 1295–1304).