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Scriptio Buddhica, Interpretatio Islamica

Buddhist *Sūtras* and Cultural Translation in Rašīd al-Dīn's *Ġāmi' al-tawārīḥ*

Abstract: The *History of India* in Rašīd al-Dīn's *Ġāmi' al-tawārīḥ* [*Compendium of Chronicles*], often called the first “world history” in the history of the world, contains Persian and Arabic translations and paraphrases of the Buddha's biography. The most notable feature of Rašīd al-Dīn's translation is his attempt to adapt Buddhist elements in the Buddhist sources to an Islamic context for his Muslim readership. Building on previous studies, this chapter explores how Buddhist terms are translated into Persian and Arabic in the Buddha biography found in the *Ġāmi' al-tawārīḥ*, within the multilingual context of Central Asia under Ilkhanate rule. The chapter also presents two case studies – the **Āryavasiṣṭhasūtra* and the *Devatāsūtra*, identified by Gregory Schopen (1982) – and compares the Perso-Arabic translations of both texts with their original Buddhist sources in Sanskrit, Chinese, and Tibetan.

Keywords: cultural translation, cultural transmission, recontextualisation, terminological exchange, etymological similarity

Note: I would like to thank the supervisors of my BA thesis (which served as the foundation for this study), Dr Mudagamuwe Maithrimurthi, Prof Michael Radich, and Dr Chen Ruixuan, for their guidance and instruction. I would also like to thank colleagues at the University of Lausanne, including Prof Ingo Strauch, Prof Blain Auer, Kristof Szitar, Charles Roger, as well as the anonymous reviewers for their valuable comments on the earlier drafts of this chapter. A modified version of this chapter was presented at the colloquium of the ERC project “Kalīla wa-Dimna – AnonymClassic” at Freie Universität Berlin on 27 April 2023. I am grateful to Prof Beatrice Gründler and the project team members for the stimulating discussion. It goes without saying that any errors remain entirely my own responsibility.

1 Introduction

Rašīd al-Dīn's (1247–1318) *Ġāmi' al-tawārīḥ*¹ has been credited as being the first “world history” in the history of the world.² In collaboration with his workshop and sources from different regions,³ Rašīd al-Dīn produced a history of Mongols (*Tārīḥ-e mubārak-e Ġāzānī*), a history of Oghuz Turks (*Tārīḥ-e āl-e Salġūq*), a history of Franks (*Tārīḥ-e Afranġ, pāpān wa-qayāšira*), a history of Jews (*Tārīḥ-e banī Esrā'īl*), a history of China (*Tārīḥ-e 'aqwām-e pādīšāhān-e Ĥetāy*), and a history of India (*Tārīḥ-e Hend va-Send va-Kašmīr*). The history of India consists of three major parts: (1) a comprehensive chronology of the cosmology and geography of India based on *Tahqīq mā li-l-Hind* of al-Bīrūnī, (2) the history of the kings of Delhi based on the third volume of Šaraf al-Dīn Širāzī's (Waṣṣāf) *Tagẓiya al-amṣār wa-tagẓiya al-'a'sār*, and (3) the life and teachings of Śākyamuni (Jahn 1980, 9).

This chapter focuses on “the life and teachings of Śākyamuni” as outlined in Jahn's (1980) scheme, which constitutes the third part of the *History of India* in the *Ġāmi' al-tawārīḥ*. The Buddha biography in the *Ġāmi' al-tawārīḥ* includes two main themes: (1) Śākyamuni's life (Ch. 2–6, 9, 20), and (2) the Buddhist “wheel of life,” or *tanāsuḥ* [transmigration of the soul] in the Persian/Arabic terminology (Ch. 7, 8, 10, 11–18). The Buddha biography in the *Ġāmi' al-tawārīḥ* includes typical Buddhist narrative elements such as the birth of the Buddha,⁴ the thirty-two physical characteristics of the Buddha (Skt. *mahāpuruṣalakṣana*),⁵ the Buddha's renunciation of the world,⁶ *pravrajyā*,⁷ the temptation of Māra,⁸ and the Buddha's *nirvāṇa*.⁹ Rašīd al-Dīn's effort to introduce Buddhist thought to the Islamicate world positions him as a pio-

1 See list of abbreviations for languages used below. The transliteration systems used in this chapter adheres to the following guidelines: Arab./Pers.: DIN 31635, with modifications proposed by Marijn van Putten (<https://phoenixblog.typepad.com/blog/2021/05/transcribing-classical-arabic.html>; 26 July 2024); Skt./Pali: IAST; Chin.: *Hànyǔ pīnyīn fāngān* 漢語拼音方案, Tib.: Wiley Transliteration. Old Turkic and Mong. transliterations follow the system of Wilkens (2021).

2 See Melville (2008). Nonetheless, Otsuka (2018) has shown that the second volume or the world history section of the *Ġāmi' al-tawārīḥ* is based on *Zubdat al-tawārīḥ* of Abū al-Qāsim Qāṣānī, who was an assistant of Rašīd al-Dīn.

3 The composition of the *Ġāmi' al-tawārīḥ* has been considered a “collective effort” according to Melville (2008), as some work was carried out by his assistant.

4 Chapter 2 (Rašīd al-Dīn 1433, f. 393v; Rašīd al-Dīn 1314/1315, f. 2027v).

5 Arab. *ʾiṭnānu wa-ṭalaṭūna ʾalāmati*, Pers. *sī va-dūʾalāmat*. Chapter 3 (Rašīd al-Dīn 1314/1315, f. 2072v–2073r; Rašīd al-Dīn 1433, f. 394r).

6 Chapter 4 (Rašīd al-Dīn 1433, f. 394r–394v; Rašīd al-Dīn 1314/1315, f. 2072v–2073r).

7 Chapter 5 (Rašīd al-Dīn 1433, f. 394v–395r; Rašīd al-Dīn 1314/1315, f. 2073r–2073v).

8 Rendered as *ʾblīs* in both the Persian and Arabic versions. Chapter 6 (Rašīd al-Dīn 1433, f. 395r–396r; Rašīd al-Dīn 1314/1315, f. 2073v–2074r).

9 Chapter 20 of the Persian version (Rašīd al-Dīn 1433, 405v–406r), Chapter 21 of the Arabic version (Rašīd al-Dīn 1314/1315, f. 2077r–2077v).

neer of “connected philology,” as he not only translated Buddhist sources into Persian and Arabic, but also adapted and reshaped Buddhist ideas to align with Islamic cultural frameworks.

In the chapters on *tanāsuḥ*, Rašīd al-Dīn shows great interest in the system of retribution in Buddhism, specifically regarding the kinds of actions that lead to rebirth into one of the “six paths” (*ṣaḍgati*), and the kinds of actions that result in rewards or punishment. For instance, in the Persian version, chapter 8 enumerates the heavens within the realm of *Šayṭan* (i.e. Skt. *kāmadhātu*), the corporeal realm (*ḡesmānī*, i.e. Skt. *rūpadhātu*), and the spiritual realm (*rūḡyānī*, i.e. Skt. *ārūpyadhātu*). Chapter 11 enumerates the eight great hells and other minor hells in Buddhist cosmology. Chapters 12 to 15 outline the actions that lead to rebirth as a *dīv* [demon] (i.e. Skt. *preta* [hungry ghost]), an animal (i.e. Skt. *tiryagyonī*), a human (i.e. Skt. *manuṣya*), and a *fer-ešte* [angel] (i.e. Skt. *deva* [god]). However, as Elverskog (2010, 152–153) notes, it is unclear whether Rašīd al-Dīn’s extensive focus on the Buddhist concept of reward and punishment and Buddhist cosmology of hells and heavens is due to their coincidental similarity with the Islamic tradition or not.

The present study, which includes the two case studies of the **Āryavaśiṣṭhasūtra* and *Devatāsūtra*, is based on two Persian manuscripts – British Library Add MS 7628, 378v–406v, dated 837 AH/1433 CE (the most complete manuscript of *Ġāmi’ al-tawārīḥ*),¹⁰ and Topkapı Sarayı Hazine 1654, dated 717 AH/1317 CE¹¹ – and one Arabic manuscript, Khalili Collections MSS 727 (previously Royal Asiatic Society A27), dated 714 AH/1314–1315 CE.¹² The Arabic manuscript is incomplete, preserving only chapters 1 to 7 and 17 to 20; however, it includes a list of Buddhist book titles which is absent in the Persian version.¹³ The Arabic manuscript largely corresponds to the Persian manuscripts. Different hypotheses have been advanced regarding the question of whether Persian or Arabic was the original language of composition. Jahn (1980, 13) argues that the Arabic manuscript, which includes a Buddhist book list that is not found in the Persian version, may be closer to the original composition of Rašīd al-Dīn and even predate the Persian version. However, there is no decisive evidence for this hypothesis. Conversely, Ogura (2019) suggests that the Arabic version was produced after the compilation of the Persian version for two reasons: (1) there are three Persian verses from the Persian version included in the Arabic version, and (2) the second volume of *Ġāmi’ al-tawārīḥ* is based on Qāṣānī’s *Zubal al-tawārīḥ*, which was composed in Persian.¹⁴

10 Rašīd al-Dīn 1433: https://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=add_ms_7628_fs001r (30 September 2023). The facsimiles are reprinted in Jahn (1965, 1980).

11 Facsimiles reprinted in Jahn (1965, 1980).

12 Facsimiles reprinted in Blair (1995; colour) and Jahn (1965, 1980; black and white).

13 For a survey of the manuscripts of the *Ġāmi’ al-tawārīḥ*, see Appendix B in Kamola (2019, 209–271).

14 Cf. n. 2 and Otsuka (2018).

2 Cultural translation of Buddhist terminology

The most salient feature of Rašīd al-Dīn's interpretation of his Buddhist sources is the tendency toward cultural translation, as reflected in his use of Islamic equivalents to translate Buddhist terms into Persian and Arabic. Examples of similar translation practices abound in the various intercultural encounters of antiquity.¹⁵ These include the *interpretatio Romana* of Germanic gods in Tacitus's *Germania*,¹⁶ *interpretatio Graeca* of Egyptian pantheon in Herodotus's *Histories*,¹⁷ and the Akkadian interpretation of Sumerian deities in ancient Mesopotamian god lists (see e.g. Lambert and Winters 2023). In this context, we may consider Rašīd al-Dīn's work as an *interpretatio Islamica* of the Buddhist pantheon.

The *interpretatio Islamica* in Rašīd al-Dīn's *Ġāmi' al-tawārīḥ* reveals the ongoing process of multicultural, multilingual, and multireligious interactions along the Silk Road, which lasted from Late Antiquity up to the period of the Mongol Empire. On the one hand, it continues the tradition of lexical borrowing, cultural translation, and shared terminology between languages of Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, and Manichaeism. Along the Silk Road, different religious traditions confronted each other though the textual traditions of Syriac, Sogdian, Middle Persian, Old Turkic, Parthian, Sanskrit, Khotanese, Tocharian, Tibetan, Tangut, Chinese, and so on (see e.g. Durkin-Meisterernst 2018). In this multilingual context, Manichaean deity names often derive from established cultural terms in the local tradition rather than being a whole new coinage. For instance, Middle Persian *Zurwān*, the personified Zoroastrian deity of time, is used to refer to the Manichaean "Father of Greatness" (Syr. *abba d-rabbūtā*) in Manichaean Middle Persian (Durkin-Meisterernst 2004, 384). Its cognate, Sogd. 'zrw', which also refers to the "Father of Greatness" in the Manichaean texts, later came to refer to the Indian deity Brahman in the Buddhist texts.¹⁸ The Sogdian 'zrw' [Brahman] was subsequently carried over into Old Turkic (*āzrua*) and Mong. (*esrua*) to designate the Buddhist deity Brahman (Gharib 1995, 93; Wilkens 2021, 132). Similarly, when Nestorian Christianity arrived in China, it adopted established Buddhist terms in Sanskrit-Chinese translation. For instance, Syr. *qaššišā* [monk] was rendered into

15 For a general overview and theoretical reflection on transcultural and cross-religious translation of divine names in history, see Assmann (1996).

16 For instance, in *Germania* §9, Tacitus identified the Old Germanic god Wotan (Old Norse *Óðinn*) as Mercurius, Donar (Old Norse *Þórr*) as Hercules, and *Ziu* as Mars (Old Norse *Týr*). The reverse process, *interpretatio Germanica* of Roman deities, is preserved in the names of weekdays in modern Germanic languages, e.g. English *Monday* (etymologically "Moon-day") corresponds to Latin *dies Lunae*, *Tuesday* (etymologically "Tiw's day") corresponds to the Latin *dies Martis*, etc.

17 For instance, Herodotus identifies the Egyptian god Amun as Zeus (§2.42.3, ed. Wilson), Isis as Demeter (§2.59.2), Horus as Apollo (§2.156.5), Bubastis as Artemis (§2.137.5), Osiris as Dionysus (§2.144.2), etc. For a comprehensive study of *interpretatio Graeca* in Herodotus's *Histories*, see Kolta (1968). For a general overview of *interpretatio Graeca* in Ancient Greek literature, see von Lieven (2016).

18 E.g. in the Sogdian *Vessantara Jātaka* (1946, 58).

Chinese as *sēng* 僧,¹⁹ the title for a Buddhist monk, which was etymologically shortened from *sēng qié* 僧伽, a transcription of Skt. *saṅgha*. Syriac words are transcribed in a way that aligns with existing Buddhist terminology, often using the strategy of phono-semantic matching. For instance, Chin. *ā luó hē* 阿羅訶, originally a phonetic transcription of Buddhist Skt. *ar(a)hat*, was used to transcribe Syr. *elāhā*, referring to the Christian God.²⁰ It is against this backdrop that we can consider Rašīd al-Dīn's *interpretatio Islamica* as a continuation of the cross-linguistic, transcultural, and inter-religious exchange on the Silk Road between Buddhism and Islam.

The *interpretatio Islamica* can also be understood in the context of the Ilkhanate ruling elites' conversion from Buddhism to Islam, beginning in 1295, shortly before the *Ġāmi' al-tawārīḥ* was completed. According to Prazniak (2014, 671), Rašīd al-Dīn had two political motives for the *History of India*: "to integrate Buddhism into the story of a Mongol Islamic present, and to consign Buddhism to the past, rendering it politically less potent in the present." In this regard, Rašīd al-Dīn adeptly navigated the complexities of the political reality. On the one hand, like his predecessors al-Bīrūnī or al-Šahrastānī, Rašīd al-Dīn succeeded in his endeavour to portrait the version of Buddhism known to him and his source Kamalaśrī from Kashmir, without explicitly denouncing the religion of the previous Mongol rulers. On the other hand, through his *interpretatio Islamica*, Rašīd al-Dīn incorporated the Buddha's life story into an Islamic framework.

The most striking example of *interpretatio Islamica* is Rašīd al-Dīn's rendering of the *ṣaḍgati* in Buddhism, the six paths into which sentient beings are reincarnated according to their *karman*. In Persian, the six paths are described as "six different stages of coming and going" ("*marāteb-e āmadšod va taraddod-e šūrāt-e moḥtalef*," Rašīd al-Dīn 1433, f. 398r3). The following table demonstrates how these six paths are translated into Persian in chapter 11 (cf. Sakaki 2000):

Table 1: Cultural Translation of Buddhist *ṣaḍgati* [six paths of afterlife].

Sanskrit	Persian
<i>deva</i> [god]	<i>fereštegī</i> [angel]
<i>asura</i> [demigod]	<i>miyān-e ensānī wa-fereštegī</i> [between human and angel]
<i>manuṣya</i> [human]	<i>ensān</i> [human]
<i>tiryagyoni</i> [animal]	<i>ḥaywānī</i> [animal]

19 E.g. the bilingual list of monks' names on the side of the *Dàqíng jīng jiào liú xíng zhōng guó bēi* 大秦景教流行中國碑. Photographs of the Xian stele are available at <http://www.for.aichi-pu.ac.jp/museum/z2dfo/yz2p01.html> (10 April 2024).

20 E.g. "*Dàqíng jīng jiào liú xíng zhōng guó bēi* 大秦景教流行中國碑: 三一妙身無元真主阿羅訶歟" [This is our eternal true lord God, triune and mysterious in substance] (Wiley in Carus 1909, 11).

Table 1 (continued)

Sanskrit	Persian
<i>preta</i> [hungry ghost]	<i>šaytanat</i> [status of Šayṭān]
<i>naraka</i> [hell]	<i>dūzaḥ</i> [hell] ²¹

As Islam is a monotheistic religion, Indian deities (*deva*) cannot qualify as a ‘god’ (*ilāh*) in Arabic. In chapter 1 (Rašīd al-Dīn 1314/1315, f. 2027r3–6),²² Rašīd al-Dīn begins with introducing the six schools and their ‘prophets’ (Arab. *nabī*): Maheśvara (*m’hyšwr*), Viṣṇu (*všn*), Brahman (*brhm’n*), Arhat (*r’hnt*), Nāstika (*n’šk*), and Śākyamuni (*š’kwmwny*). As Akasoy (2013, 181) points out, Rašīd al-Dīn avoids the term *rasūl* [messenger] to refer to these Indian figures, because *rasūl* is reserved for those who have been sent with a divine message in Islam. Furthermore, the followers of Maheśvara, Viṣṇu, and Brahman are described as worshippers of an “idol” (*al-šanam*),²³ as opposed to the one true God, Allah. Similarly, the seven buddhas of the past (Skt. *saptatathāgata*) are introduced as “prophets” at the end of chapter 1: Vipāśyin (*wypšy*),²⁴ Śikhin (*šyhy*), Viśvabhū (*wšvbd*), Krakucchanda (*kr’kwšnd*), Kanakamuni (*knkwmwd*), Kāśyapa (*k’šyp*), Śākyamuni (*š’kwmwny*) (Rašīd al-Dīn 1433,393–8; Rašīd al-Dīn 1314/1315, f. 2072v1–3).²⁵ This form of cultural accommodation created a framework that enabled Rašīd al-Dīn to accommodate extra-Islamic religious groups and, simultaneously, to establish hierarchical distinctions.

Indian deities are transformed into figures resembling Muslim followers of Islam. In the scene depicting the birth of Śākyamuni, the four deities Maheśvara, Viṣṇu, Brahma, and Indra, who come to visit, are described as “the four angels who pray to God” (Pers. *ḥoday*/Arab. *al-‘ālihiyya*).²⁶ Mythical place names in Buddhist cosmology are also translated with comparable names in Islamic cosmology. Buddhist hell (Skt. *naraka*) is regularly rendered as Arab. *ḡahannam* (Pers. *dūzaḥ*), the Quranic word for ‘hell.’²⁷ Buddhist

21 Cognate of Middle Persian *dušox* [hell] and Avestan *duž-aṇhav-* [hell], lit. ‘bad existence,’ both of which were also used to designate “hell” in Zoroastrian context. In the Indian history of *Ġāmi’ al-tawārīḥ*, Persian *dūzaḥ* regularly corresponds to *ḡahannam*, the Quranic word for “hell,” in the Arabic version.

22 The transliteration in ⟨⟩ in the following paragraph follows the consonantal spelling in the Arabic manuscript.

23 “*kullu-hum ya’badūna l-šanama*” (Rašīd al-Dīn 1314/1315, f. 2072r5).

24 The Pers./Arab. transcriptions reflect the nominative form *Vipāśyī*.

25 Röhrborn (1989, 132) concludes that these spellings do not reflect the names circulated in Central Asia, intermediated by Northwestern Prakrit forms, but are instead closer to Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit forms of Indian origin.

26 Pers.: “*čahār ferešte ke da’vā-ye ḥoday mikonand*” (Rašīd al-Dīn 1433, f. 393v20).

Arab.: “*wa-l-malā’ikatu l-‘arba’atu llaḏī kânū yad’ūna l-‘ālihiyyata*” (Rašīd al-Dīn 1314/1315, f. 2072v16–17).

27 Arab. *ḡahannam* is etymologically connected with Hebrew *gē-hinnom* [hell]. Jeffery (2007 [1938], 105–106; cf. Nöldeke 1910, 34) suggests that the Arabic word is borrowed from Hebrew via *Gəʿaz ḡāhān-nām*.

heaven (Skt. *svarga*) is regularly rendered as Arab. *ġanna* (Pers. *behešt*), the Quranic word for ‘garden’ or ‘paradise’ especially used in reference to Eden (see Gardet 2012a [1965], 2012b [1965]). Mount Meru is consistently replaced with Mount *Qāf* (e.g. Rašīd al-Dīn 1314/1315, f. 2074v32–2075r3),²⁸ a mythological mountain in Islamic cosmology.²⁹ In chapter 5, Rašīd al-Dīn mentions the four kings of Mount Qaf:

Pers.: *fereštegān čahār pādesāh ke bar čahār taraf-e kūh-e Qāf hākem*. (Rašīd al-Dīn 1433, f. 394v26)

Arab.: *fa-l-malā'ikatu l-'arba'atu llađīna kānū 'aḥkāman 'alā 'arba'ati 'aṭrāfi ġabali Qāfi*. (Rašīd al-Dīn 1314/1315, f. 2073v31)

[The four angels (kings), who were governors over the four directions of Mount Qaf.]³⁰

The four angels or kings are presumably the four heavenly kings (*caturmahārāja*) residing on Mount Meru in Buddhist cosmology, namely *Vaiśravaṇa*, *Virūḍhaka*, *Dhṛtarāṣṭra*, and *Virūpākṣa*, each in charge of one cardinal direction. The same chapter explains the aetiology of the name Śākyamuni. The name Śākyamuni was bestowed by a voice from the sky, when Indra came to the Buddha, asking him to leave his solitude:

Pers.: *ferešte (nḏr) ke hazār češm dārad piš-e ū āmad va goft gāh ān āmad ke az in maqām bīrūn āyi va dar in ḥāl az samān nedā āmad va ū-rā šakamūnī ḥ'andand. va inak ahal maḡḥāb va diḡar adyān ū-rā ādam mīḥ'anand va nešān-e pāy-eš bar kūh-e sarāndīp al-ḡaḡar ast ānḡā ke yāqūt-e aḡmar ast*. (Rašīd al-Dīn 1433, f. 395r8–10)

[The angel Indra, who has a thousand eyes, came to him and said: you go away from this place. At this moment, a sound came from the sky and called him Śākyamuni. But followers of other sects and religions call him Ādam. His footprint is the stone on the mountain of Sarāndīp, where there are red rubies.]

It is interesting that, according to Rašīd al-Dīn, Śākyamuni is equated with Adam by other religious communities. This aligns with the tradition surrounding the rock of *Śrīpāda* on Adam's Peak in Sri Lanka, which is held to be the footprint of the Buddha by Sinhalese Therevāda Buddhists,³¹ while the Muslim community considers it to be

28 E.g. Rašīd al-Dīn (1314/1315, f. 2074v32–2075r3).

29 See Streck and Miguel (2012 [1978]); the concept is borrowed from the Iranian tradition.

30 All translations into Modern English are my own.

31 Cf. *Mahāvamsa* (1: 77–78): “*Tattha dhammaṃ desayitvā, satthā lonukampako; / Uggantvā sumane kūṭe, padaṃ dassesi nāyako. / Tasmim pabbatapādamhi, sahasaṅgho yathāsukhaṃ; / Divā vihāraṃ katvāna, dīghavāpi mupāgami*” [When the Teacher, compassionate to the whole world, had preached the doctrine there, he rose, the Master, and left the traces of his footsteps plain to sight on Sumanakuta. And after he had spent the day as it pleased him at the foot of this mountain, with the brotherhood, he set forth for Dīghavāpi] (*Mahāvamsa*, tr. Geiger and Bode 1912, 8). Cf. Fā Xiān's 佛國記 *Fó guó jì* [Record of the Buddhist Kingdoms] on 師子國 *shī zi guó*: “佛至其國欲化惡龍。以神足力一足躡王城北。一足躡山頂。兩跡相去十五由延。” [Buddha came to his country desiring to reform a wicked

the footprint of Adam. Ibn Baṭṭūta described the two paths leading to the footprint of Adam in his *Travels*:

wa-yaz'umūna 'anna fī dālika l-wardi kitābatun yuqra'u min-hā smu llāhi ta'ālā wa-smu rasūli-hi 'am wa-fī l-ġabali tariqāni 'ilā l-qadami 'aḥadu-humā yu'rafu bi-tariqi bābā wa l-āḥaru bi-tariqi māmā ya'ūna ādam wa-ḥawwa'a. (Ibn Baṭṭūta 1858, 179–180)

[It is claimed that on this rose (on the mountain), there is an inscription on which the name of the Lofty Allah and the name of his prophet are written. In the mountain there are two paths toward the Foot. One of them is known as the path of Bābā, the other the path of Māmā, which mean Ādam and Eve.]

The Buddhist deity Māra is also integrated into this Islamicised framework. In the episode of Māra's temptation in chapter 6 (Rašīd al-Dīn 1433, f. 395r–396r), Skt. *Māra* is transformed into Arab. *'Iblīs*, – an appellation of *Šayṭān* [Satan] drawn from the Quran. The three daughters of Māra, embodiments of *tṛṣṇā* [thirst], *arati* [aversion], and *rāga* [passion],³² are transformed into *ḥūr* (Pers. *ḥūrī*), virgins in the paradise promised to believers in the Quran.

Apart from cultural translation, Rašīd al-Dīn frequently employs another translation strategy: introducing the Sanskrit technical terms or proper names in transcription, followed by a gloss using the formula “*ya'ni* ‘i.e.’ + [literal translation].” This approach is also used in al-Bīrūnī's *Taḥqīq mā li-l-Hind* or in Dārā Šukōh's *Sirr-e Akbar* (Persian translation of the *Upaṇiṣad*).³³ For instance, in the list of the Buddhist hells in chapter 11 of the Persian text,³⁴ Rašīd al-Dīn explains the name *Asinakhā* in the following manner:

dragon, and by his supernatural power placed one foot to the north of the royal city, and the other on the top of a mountain, being fifteen *yu-yen* apart] (Fā Xiǎn, *Record of the Buddhist Kingdoms*, tr. Giles 1877, 94).

³² See e.g. *Samyutta-Nikāya* (4.25, vol. 1, 273–279).

³³ For instance, in the Persian translation of the *Praśna-upaṇiṣad* in the *Sirr-e Akbar*, §1.1: ⟨*pnkht prśn*⟩ *az* ⟨*thbn byd*⟩ *ya'ni dar in* ⟨*pnkht*⟩ *su'al va-ḡawāb besyār ast* [Prašna-upaṇiṣad from the Atharvaveda, i.e. in this Upaniṣad there are many questions and answers.] (cf. Göbel-Groß 1962, 62–63). “Questions and answers” are an etymologising explanation for Skt. *praśna* [question] in the title.

In the *Taḥqīq mā li-l-Hind*, al-Bīrūnī uses more frequently ‘ay [i.e.], e.g. “(‘bykt) ‘ay šay'un bilā šūra-tin ‘avyakta” [i.e. something without form] (Sachau 1887, 40). “Something without form” is an etymological explanation of Skt. *a-vyakta* [not visible].

³⁴ Hells mentioned by Rašīd al-Dīn in Persian transcription: ⟨*šnyrv*⟩ (Skt. *Samjīva*), ⟨*klšvtr*⟩ (Skt. *Kāla-sūtra*), ⟨*t'pn*⟩ (Skt. *Tāpāna*), ⟨*pr'tpn*⟩ (Skt. *Pratābana*), ⟨*snk't*⟩ (Skt. *Saṅghāta*), ⟨*rvrt*⟩ (Skt. *Raurava*), ⟨*mhr'rvrv*⟩ (Skt. *Mahāraurava*), ⟨*vyš*⟩ (Skt. *Avīci*), ⟨*s'lmly*⟩ (Skt. *Śālmanī*), ⟨*sptrvn*⟩ (Skt. *Asipatravana*), ⟨*vytrvn*⟩ (Skt. *Vaitaraṇī*). Note that the scribe of the Persian manuscript (Rašīd al-Dīn 1433, British Library Add MS 7628) does not distinguish between گ *g* and ک *k*, or ب *b* and پ *p*.

va-nām-e ān qawm Asīnakāt ((‘syn’k’t)) **ya’nī šamšīr-nāḥon.**³⁵ (Rašīd al-Dīn 1433, f. 398v21)

[And the name of these people³⁶ is Asinakhā, that is “sword-nail.”]

In the phrase *ya’nī šamšīr-nāḥon*, *šamšīr* [sword] is a gloss of Sanskrit *asi* [sword], and *nāḥon* [nail] is a gloss of Sanskrit *nakha* [nail]. The same strategy is applied in chapter 1, when Rašīd al-Dīn first mentions the book of Abhidharma:

Pers.: *va-Šākamūnī-rā kitābī ast nām-e ū Abidarm ((‘bdr̥m)) va ma’nā-ye in laft avval va-āḥer-e hame-ye kitābhā ast va dar in kitāb Abidarm goyand ke dar advār-e muqāddam paygāmbari būde ast nām-e ū Dīpankar ((‘dypnkr)) ya’nī čerāg donyā.* (Rašīd al-Dīn 1433, f. 393r32–33)

Arab.: *wa-lī-Šākamūnī kāna smu-hū Abidarm ((‘bdr̥m)) wa-ma’nā ḥaḍā l-lafzi ‘awwalu l-kutubi wa-l-āḥiri-hā wa-ft ḥaḍā l-kitābī yaqūlu kāna ft l-‘adwārī l-mutaqāddimati nabīyun ismu-hū Dī-bankar ((‘dypnkr)) ya’nī sirāg d-duniyā.* (Rašīd al-Dīn 1314/1315, f. 2072r31–32)

[Śākyamuni has a book titled Abhidharma. The word means “first and last of all the books.” In this book Abhidharma, it is said that in the previous generations, there was a prophet named Dīpaṅkara, that is “light of the world.”]

Similarly, in the Buddha’s birth scene in chapter 2, Śuddhodana and Mahāmāyā are each introduced with their Sanskrit names and the corresponding etymological gloss:

Pers.: *nām-e ū Šudūdan ((‘šdwdn)) ke ma’nā-ye vī mardī-ye pāk-e andrūn bāšad.* (Rašīd al-Dīn 1433, f. 393v14)

Arab.: *ismu-hu Šadūdan ((‘šdwdn))³⁷ ya’nī ‘inna-hū kāna qalbu-hū šāfiyan naḍīfan min ḡayri ḡillīn.* (Rašīd al-Dīn 1314/1315, f. 2072v8)

[His name was Śuddhodana, that is “a man with pure interior.”]³⁸

Pers.: *nām-e ū Māhāmāyā ((m’h’m’y))³⁹ ya’nī bozorgī ke čonānk hast ū-rā našenāsand.* (Rašīd al-Dīn 1433, f. 393v15)

Arab.: *ismu-hā Māhāmāyā ya’nī mā yu’rafu ‘aḥadun ‘aḡamata-hā kamā hiya.* (Rašīd al-Dīn 1314/1315, f. 2072v9)

[Her name was Mahāmāyā, that is “there is no one as great as her.”]

³⁵ All emphasis in bold here and in the following has been added by the author.

³⁶ I.e. residents of this hell.

³⁷ Vocalisation in the manuscript: شُدُون.

³⁸ Translation of Arabic: “His name was Śuddhodana, i.e. his heart was pure and clean, without any malice.”

³⁹ Spelled (m’h’y) in Rašīd al-Dīn 1433, f. 393v15. The reading (m’h’m’y) is supported by the manuscript Topkapı Sarayı Hazine 1654, f. 345v12.

The Persian gloss probably etymologises the name *Śuddhodana* as Sanskrit *śuddha* [pure] and *udara* [belly, interior]. For *Mahāmāyā*, the Persian gloss focuses on the first part of the name, *mahā* [great].

While some glosses reflect the genuine etymology of the Sanskrit word, some others seem to originate from Rašīd al-Dīn or Kamalaśrī's own interpretation. For instance, the name Śākyamuni is explained as:

Pers.: *Šākamūni ya'nī pādešāhi ke darvīšt iḥtiyār karde bāšad*. (Rašīd al-Dīn 1433, f. 396v8)

Arab.: *Šākamūni ya'ni huwa sulṭānun iḥtāra l-faqrā 'alā l-ḡinā*. (Rašīd al-Dīn 1314/1315, f. 2072v3)

[Śākyamuni, i.e. a king who has chosen poverty (over richness).⁴⁰]

Rather than an etymological gloss of the Sanskrit word, the interpretation “a king who has chosen poverty” is Rašīd al-Dīn's interpretation based on Śākyamuni's life story.

3 Central Asian Buddhist terms

Another notable feature of the Buddha biography in the *Ġāmi' al-tawārīḥ* is that many Buddhist terms used by Rašīd al-Dīn exhibit characteristics of Uyghur-Mongolian Buddhism, with influences from Chinese and Tibetan Buddhism.⁴¹ While the majority of sources used by Rašīd al-Dīn and his informant Kamalaśrī are clearly of Sanskrit origin from Kashmir, technical terms typical of Tibetan, Uyghur-Mongolian, and Chinese Buddhist texts are interspersed throughout the text. This reflects the cosmopolitan nature of the Ilkhanate realm, where travellers from all over Eurasia converged and multiple cultures and religions coexisted. Below are some examples of Central Asian Buddhist terms that were derived from Old Uyghur, Mongolian, or Tibetan and assimilated into the Persian and Arabic texts.

3.1 *Burḥān* (brḥ'n) [Buddha]

Throughout the Buddha biography in the *Ġāmi' al-tawārīḥ*, Rašīd al-Dīn never employs the Sanskrit term *buddha* when referencing the title “Buddha.” Instead, he uses the term *burḥān*: for example, *Šākamūni Burḥān*, *Amitā Burḥān*. This is evident in one of the titles in the list of Buddhist books in the Arabic manuscript:

⁴⁰ Only in the Arabic version.

⁴¹ For a survey of the history of Buddhism in the Ilkhanate, see Röhrborn (1989), Elverskog (2010), Yoeli-Tlalim (2013), and Prazniak (2014).

Kitābu ⟨brmt'y⟩ fī Šukāwātī (⟨šwk'wt⟩) allatī hiya l-ğannatu wa-'Amitā[bur]ḥān⁴² huwa hunāka. (Rašid al-Dīn 1314/1315, f. 2074v4–5)⁴³

[The book *brmt'y* on Sukhāvati, i.e. the Paradise and Amitā-Burḥān is found here.]

The Buddha Amitābha is introduced as *amitā-burḥān* ⟨mt'brḥ'n⟩ in the Arabic text. The title *burḥān* was borrowed from Old Turkic *burhan* [Buddha] (Doerfer 1965, 282–284), which is also attested in Mong. as *burqan*. Etymologically, Old Turkic *burhan* is a compound of *bur* [Buddha] (from Middle Chinese 佛 */but/⁴⁴) and *han* [king]. The transcription of the name *Amitā* also suggests that the name was not directly taken from Sanskrit *Amitābha*, but rather from the Old Turkic form *Amita*, which in turn was borrowed from Chinese 阿彌陀 ā mí tuó, shortened from 阿彌陀佛 ā mí tuó fó. The worship of Amitābha and Sukhāvati is a practice typical of Pure Land Buddhism, a branch of Mahāyāna Buddhism widely spread in China and East Asia. The name *Amitā-burḥān* is one of the most prominent indications of Chinese Buddhist influence in the Buddha biography of *Ĝāmi' al-tawārīḥ* (Elverskog 2010, 157).

3.2 *Ḥanšī* (ḥnšy) “Avalokiteśvara”

The name *Ḥanšī* occurs twice in the *Ĝāmi' al-tawārīḥ*. The first occurrence is found in chapter 10 of the Persian version, in the section on the attributes (*ma'refat-e kalematī*) of the Buddhist deity (*ma'būd*, lit. ‘worshipped’):

va-ān-rā Lūkešvar ⟨lvkšvr⟩ *mīḥ^vanand* *va-be-zabān-e Ḥitāy ū-rā Kwanšī* ⟨kwnšy⟩ *gūyand*. (Rašid al-Dīn 1433, f. 398r1)

[People call him Lokeśvara, and in the Chinese language Guān Shì (觀世).]

⁴² The manuscript reads ⟨mṭh'n⟩ *Amitāhan*, but this is evidently a scribal error as the name is spelled ⟨mtbrḥ'n⟩ *Amitāburḥān* in the short description beneath the title.

⁴³ Cf. Elverskog (2010, 157).

⁴⁴ Phonetic reconstruction according to Pulleybank (1991, 96). It is a typical feature of Northwestern Middle Chinese dialects that syllable final /-t/ in Middle Chinese is rendered as ⟨r⟩ in Old Turkic; compare also *bir* [brush] from 筆 */pit/. Coblin (1991, 67–70) provides abundant examples to show that what scholars reconstructed with -t final according to Chinese rime books was probably realised as an “r-like” sound in medieval Northwestern China, because the characters with reconstructed -t final regularly transcribed Sanskrit -r- from 400 CE onward. Similarly, Sino-Korean words borrowed from Middle Chinese transcribe /-t/ with ⟨l⟩ (ㄹ), e.g. 불 *bul* [Buddha] (< 佛), 필 *pil* [brush] (< 筆). For the phonological details of Middle Chinese phoneme /-t/ entered Middle Korean as /l/, see Martin (1997).

Lokeśvara (*loka-īśvara* [lord of the world]) is one of the variant forms of Avalokiteśvara.⁴⁵ The transcription from Chinese reflects Late Middle Chinese pronunciation */*kuan ʃiaj*/.⁴⁶ The other occurrence of *Ḥanṣī* is found in the book list in the Arabic manuscript, where the book title reads:

Kitābu Kārandūkā ((*k'rndwk'*)) *l-munzalu 'ilā Ḥunṣī Būdisat*⁴⁷ ((*ḥnšy bwdst*)) *min Ḥunṣ Būdisat*. (Rašid al-Dīn 1314/1315, f. 2074v19–20)⁴⁸

[Book of *Kāraṇḍavyūha*, sent to Guān Shì Bodhisattva from Guān Shì Bodhisattva (?)]

According to Elverskog (2010, 157–158), the book title here points to the tradition of *Kāraṇḍavyūhasūtra* preserved in the Chinese (大乘莊嚴寶王經 *Dà shèng zhuāng yán bǎo wáng jīng* T1050) and Tibetan ('*Phags pa za ma tog bkod pa*, Derge, mo sde, ja, 200a3–247b7) canons. The plot summary of Avalokiteśvara's descent to hell (Arab. *ḡaḥīm*) to redeem its inhabitants is reminiscent of the plot in T1050, where Avalokiteśvara descends to Avīci hell, extinguishes the blazing fire, and transforms the scorching hell into a realm of cold (*Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 1050.20.48b15–49a26).

According to Röhrborn (1989, 131), the name ⟨*ḥnšy*⟩ can be interpreted either as *ḥwanṣī*, a direct transcription of Late Middle Chinese */*kuan ʃiaj*/, or as *ḥunṣī*, as it is attested in Old Turkic *konṣī* (cf. Wilkens 2021, 391). In any case, the fact that the name originates from Chinese *Guān Shì* rather than the Indic form *Avalokiteśvara* provides telling evidence of Chinese influence on the Buddhism present in the thirteenth-century Mongol Ilkhanate.

3.3 *Qaṣūrdī* ⟨*qṣwrđy*⟩ 'Kanjur'

Another line that reflects influence of Central Asian Buddhism is found in chapter 20 of the Persian version and chapter 21 of the Arabic version in the scene of Śākyamuni's death.⁴⁹ It recounts that after Śākyamuni's death, a man came and compiled his teaching into a book:

⁴⁵ *Lokeśvara* corresponds to 世自在 *shì zì zài* in the Chinese translation. For various Chinese translations (觀世, 觀世音, 觀自在, 觀世自在, etc.) of the name of Avalokiteśvara and the possible underlying Sanskrit/Middle Indic forms (*Avalokitasvara* > **Avalokitaśvara* > *Avalokiteśvara*), see Karashima (1999, 2016).

⁴⁶ Reconstruction according to Pulleyblank (1991, 113, 285).

⁴⁷ The spelling seems to reflect the Middle Indic form, which simplifies the consonant cluster -*tv*- > -*tt*-; cf. Skt. *bodhisat(t)va*, Pali *bodhisatta*.

⁴⁸ The ending *min ḥwnṣ budasat* was probably corrupted in the process of copying. Jahn (1965, lxxii) proposes to reconstruct the line as "Kuan-Shi Bodhisat who was sent by Shākamūnī burkhān from Allah (to Hell)."

⁴⁹ See also Yoeli-Tlalim (2013, 206).

Pers.: *wa-soḥanān va fawāyēd-e Šākamūnī ḡam' kard va-az ān daftarī sāḥt va-maḡmū'e pardāht va-nām-e ān Qašūrdī ((qšwrđy)) nehād.* (Rašīd al-Dīn 1433, f. 403r17–18)

Arab.: *wa-ḡama'ū min kalāmi Šākamūni wa-fawā'id-hī kitāban wa-sammaw-hu Qašūrdī.* (Rašīd al-Dīn 1314/1315, f. 2077r35–2077v1)

[He collected the words and useful sayings of Śākyamuni into a book and called it Kanjur.]

The name *Qašūrdī* likely reflects Tibetan *bka' 'gyur* [translated words],⁵⁰ the title of part of the Tibetan Buddhist canon. It is surprising that the name *bka' 'gyur* already appears in the *Ġāmi' al-tawārīḥ*, as the Tibetan canon first appeared in its complete form in the late thirteenth century.⁵¹

3.4 *baḥṣī*

According to Rašīd al-Dīn, his informant was a Buddhist monk from Kashmir named Kamālaśrī Baḥṣī ((*km'īšry bḥṣy*)). The name *Kamālaśrī* is certainly a Sanskrit name composed of *kamala* [lotus] and *śrī* [splendour]. More interesting is the title *baḥṣī*, which denotes a Buddhist monk in the Mongolian Ilkhanate, similar to the use of *blama* in Tibetan.⁵² Etymologically, *baḥṣī* is a loanword from Old Turkic *bahši*, whose ultimate etymological source is Middle Chinese 博士 **pak q̄zi'* [learned scholar].⁵³ The word *bahši* and its cognates are *Wanderwörter* in Central Asia that are attested in almost every Central Asian language with a written tradition: Old Turkic *bahši*⁵⁴ (Wilkens 2021, 138), Tibetan *pag shi*⁵⁵ (van der Kuijp 1995), Mongolian *bayši*, Manchu *baksi*. The word was even reborrowed into the Chinese of the 清 Qing Dynasty

50 Röhrborn (1989, 130), against Jahn (1980, 101), interprets the Arabic spelling (*qšwrđy*) as a shortened form of Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakośavṛttiśāstra* (cf. Old Turkic title *kośavṛti*), which was in circulation in Central Asia.

51 For the historical implication of the title *bka' gyur* appearing in a thirteenth-century Persian chronicle, see Elverskog (2010, 161–162) and Yoeli-Tlalim (2013, 206).

52 For *baḥṣī*, see also Spuler (2012 [1960]). After the Ilkhanate had converted to Islam and started to suppress Buddhism in 1295, *baḥṣī* denoted a scribe of Turkish and Mongol records, similar to the Mongolian *bičigei* or Turkish *bitikçi*.

53 The phonetical reconstruction follows Pulleyblank (1991). The competing theory that Persian *baḥṣī* or Old Turkic *bahši* [monk] is borrowed from Sanskrit *bhikṣu* is less compelling for obvious phonological reasons: the syllable *baḥ-* rather than **biḥ-* favours the etymology from Middle Chinese 博士 over Sanskrit *bhikṣu*. The semantic change from 'learned scholar' to 'Buddhist monk' can be accounted for by the semantic narrowing from 'learned scholar' → 'teacher' → '(Buddhist) teacher, i.e. Buddhist monk.'

54 Also spelled *pahši* or *pahši*.

55 Variant spellings include *bag shi*, *p/bak shi*, *pa shi*, *dpa' shi*, *sba shi*, *sbag shi*, *dpag shi*; cf. van der Kuijp (1995, 276).

(1644–1912) as an official title 巴克什 *bā kè shí* and 把式 *bǎ shì* or 把勢 *bǎ shì*, all of which mean “one who is experienced in a certain skill.”⁵⁶

Little is known about Kamālaśrī Baḥṣī as a historical figure. Yoeli-Tlalim has attempted to find traces of him in an inscription discovered in Kashmir dated to the period of the reign of King Rājadeva (r. 1213–1236 CE), which “records the consecration of a mandala dedicated to Avalokiteśvara by the teacher Kamalaśrī” (Yoeli-Tlalim 2013, 202–203). However, it is uncertain whether this was the same Kamālaśrī mentioned by Rašid al-Dīn. Zieme (2002, 226) notes that the name is mentioned in the Turfan Chinese-Uyghur fragment Ch/U 7024:⁵⁷

t'βq'c kwyn t' mn k'm'l'syry pydydym.

[I, Kamalaśiri, have written on this Chinese scroll.]

Another possible candidate of the historical Kamālaśrī is found in a Chinese inscription from the Yuan Dynasty discovered on Wutaishan 五臺山, which mentions a certain 阿麻剌室利板的答 *Ā má lā shì lì bǎn dì dá* ‘Amalaśrī Paṇḍita’ of Kashmiri (罽賓 *jī bīn*) origin. He was granted the right to govern the 西部僧侶部族 *xī bù sēng lǚ bù zú* [the monks and tribes in the Western region], with the title 灌頂國師 *Guàn dǐng guó shī* after 1333.⁵⁸ Even if this Amalaśrī is a contemporary of Rašid al-Dīn, it remains a phonological difficulty that the Chinese transcription points to /a/ rather than /ka/ in the first syllable of *Kamalaśrī*.

3.5 *nom* ⟨*nwm*⟩ ‘*dharma*’

At the beginning of the *History of India*, Rašid al-Dīn introduces his informant in the following manner:

Pers.: *Kamālaśrī Baḥṣī ke mowled wa manšā'-e ū az balād-e Kašmīr ast wa bar ma'refat-e nūm* ((*nwm*)) *ke kitāb-e Šākamūnī ast.* (Rašid al-Dīn 1433, f. 378r11)

Arab.: *Kamālaśrī al-Baḥṣī llaḍī mawliḍu-hū wa-manšā'u-hū balādu Kašmīr wa-huwa bi-ḡawāmiḍi l-kitābi l-mawsūmi nūm tašnifi Šākamunī 'arīfun wa-'alā ḥaqāyiqi-hī muṭṭali'un wa-wāqī'un.* (Rašid al-Dīn 1314/1315, f. 2059r9–10)

[Kamālaśrī Baḥṣī, whose birthplace and place of origin is the land of Kashmir, and who is well equipped with the knowledge of *nom*, i.e. the book of Šākyamuni.]

56 Cf. Luó Zhúfēng 羅竹風 et al. (1986–1994, s.v. 巴克什).

57 For a digital version, see https://turfan.bbaw.de/dta/ch_u/images/chu7024versototal.jpg (10 April 2024).

58 See Hibino (1973, 652), cited in Matsui (2008, 163).

The word *nom*, here used in the sense of ‘*dharma*,’ is not a common Persian word recorded in any Persian dictionary.⁵⁹ Instead, *nom* is a loanword from Old Turkic *nom* [dharma, law]. Etymologically, *nom* is derived from Greek *nómos* [law], which probably entered Old Turkic via Sogdian *nwm* [law] (Wilkens 2021, 494).

4 Case study: **Āryavasiṣṭhasūtra*

Among the Buddhist elements discussed above, the **Āryavasiṣṭhasūtra*, embedded in the seventh chapter of the Persian version in the form of a *hekāyat* [story], is one of the chapters whose sources have already been identified. Therefore, the *sūtra* provides a great example as an object of closer examination of Rašīd al-Dīn’s translation strategy. As identified by Schopen (1982, 226–227), the story is a translation (if not paraphrase) of a short text which exhibits structural parallels to the Tibetan ‘*Phags pa gnas ’jog gi mdo* (Derge Kanjur, mdo sde, sa, 263b6–268a4)⁶⁰ and the first five *suttas* of the *Uposathavagga* of the Pali *Āṅguttara-nikāya*.⁶¹ The name *Vasiṣṭha* (Pali *Vaseṭṭha*, Tib. *gNas ’jog*) is transcribed as *Vāsiṣṭ* in Persian.⁶²

The plot of the *hekāyat* can be divided into three parts:

- (1) The brahmin *Vasiṣṭha*, having practiced rigid fasting (*rūze*) for seventy-two days, encounters Śākyamuni on his way. Śākyamuni tells *Vasiṣṭha* that he was practising fasting in the wrong way, such that he would not be able to reach heaven (*behešt raftan*).
- (2) Upon *Vasiṣṭha*’s questioning, Śākyamuni teaches him to take vows and to practise a series of actions reminiscent of the eight precepts of *uposatha*.⁶³
- (3) Śākyamuni enumerates the six heavens of the world of *Śaytān* (Skt. *kāmadhātu*), the seventeen heavens of the corporeal world (*ḡesmānī*; Skt. *rūpadhātu*), and four heavens of the world of spirit (*rūhyānī*; Skt. *ārūpyadhātu*).

The focus of the *sūtra* concerns the moral practice prescribed during the fasting days. Persian *rūze*⁶⁴ [fasting] corresponds to Buddhist Skt. *poṣadha*, Pali *uposatha*, Tib. *bsnyen gnas*, and Chin. 齋 *zhāi* in Buddhist sources. Interestingly, in the Islamic con-

59 The usual reading of the spelling ⟨*nwm*⟩ *nawm* [sleep] in Modern New Persian is of Arabic origin.

60 English translation of the Tibetan text by Elizabeth Angowski (“The *Sūtra* of *Vasiṣṭha*,” 2023). I thank the anonymous reviewer for this reference.

61 *Āṅguttara-nikāya* (8.41–15 = Ed. Hardy, vol. 4, 249–262).

62 Note the metathesis of sibilants *Vāsiṣṭ* < **Vāsiṣṭ* in the Persian transcription.

63 Buddhist Sanskrit *aṣṭāṅga poṣadha*, Pali *aṭṭhaṅgasamannāgata uposatha*, Tib. ‘*phags pa’i yan lag brgyad dang ldan pa’i bsnyen gnas*, Chinese 八關齋 *bā guān zhāi*.

64 From Middle Persian *rōzag* [fasting, fasting day], derived from *rōz* [day] with the suffix *-ag* denoting semantic narrowing; cf. *drōnag* [rainbow] from *drōn* [bow], *nāmāg* [letter] from *nām* [name]; cf. Durkin-Meisterernst (2014, 156).

text, Persian *rūze* usually connotes Arabic *ṣawm* [fasting], one of the five pillars (*arkān*) of Islam.

The story opens with a portrayal of Vasiṣṭha permeated with Sufi terms:

brahmanī būd nām-e ū Vāṣeṣt sālek-e nāsek-e ʿābed-e zāhed ke be-har haftād va-dū ruz rūze goṣādi va-rīāzāt va-moḡāhede-ye saht mīkešid. (Rašīd al-Dīn 1433, f. 396r8–9)

[There was a brahmin named Vasiṣṭha, a pious and zealous ascetic following the spiritual path, who practised *rūze* for all seventy-two days and who was engaged in rigid asceticism with endeavour.]

The attribute *sālek* [wayfarer], the active participle of the Arabic verbal root √*SLK* [to follow a path], is a cognate of Arabic *sulūk* [path, journey] (see Lewisohn 2012 [1997]), which is a crucial technical term in Islamic mysticism. The attribute *nāsek* [hermit, ascetic], according to Thackston (2019, xvi), often serves to translate ‘hermit’ (Skt. *muni*) or ‘brahmin’ (Skt. *brāhmaṇa*) in Naṣr Allāh Munšī’s Persian translation of *Kalīla wa-Dimna*.⁶⁵ The attribute *ābed* [(God) serving], the active participle of the Arabic verbal root √*BD* [to serve], is a cognate of Arabic *ʿabd* [servant], which usually denotes “servant of Allāh” in the Quranic context (Brunschvig 2012 [1960]). The attribute *zāhed* [ascetic], the active participle of the Arabic verbal root √*ZHD* [to abandon], is a cognate of Arabic *zuhd* [renunciation, asceticism], which is another crucial technical term in Islamic mysticism. All the above-mentioned attributes are attested in the *Qurʾān* (Badawi and Haleem 2008, 405, 449, 595, 934). In comparison, in the Tibetan version, *Vasiṣṭha* (*gNas ʾJog*) is characterised by either Tib. *bram ze* [brahmin] or *drang srong* [sage, ṛṣi] (Derge Kanjur, mdo sde, sa, 264a1). In the Pali version, Vasiṣṭha (Pali *Vāseṭṭha*) is an *upāsaka* [householder] (*Aṅguttara-nikāya* I. 21, vol. 4, 249).

When Vasiṣṭha encounters Śākyamuni on his way, Rašīd al-Dīn describes Śākyamuni in the following manner:

*Šākamūnī bā nomre-ye b(a)rahmanān va-morīdān be-d-ū resīd va barāheme*⁶⁶ *ū-rā Goutam* (*(gwtm)*) *mīḡʾānand yaʾnī darvīš.* (Rašīd al-Dīn 1433, f. 396r10–11)

[Śākyamuni came together with a group of brahmins and disciples. The brahmins called him Gautama, i.e. “mendicant” (*darvīš*).]

The phrase “*bā nomre-ye b(a)rahmanān va-morīdān*” is reminiscent of stock phrases in Buddhist texts such as the Pali “*Bhagavā cārikaṃ carati mahatā bhikkhusaṅghena saddhiṃ*” [the Venerable One travels together with a large group of *bhikkhus*]. The name Gautama is explained as *darvīš*, a word usually applied to a Sufi practitioner who chooses material poverty to embrace spiritual richness (Shaki and Algar 1996).

⁶⁵ On the other hand, the terms are rendered by *mḡušā* [magus (Zoroastrian priests)] in the Old Syriac version.

⁶⁶ Note the two different plural forms of *brahman* in the same line: برهمن *b(a)rahmān* with Iranian plural ending *-ān* and بر اهمه *barāheme* with Arabic broken plural.

After Vasiṣṭha and Śākyamuni have exchanged greetings, Śākyamuni asks:

čērā čonīn zard va za'if va nātavān šode-yī va az ġān ramaqī namānde. (Rašīd al-Dīn 1433, f. 396v11–13)

[Why are you pale, weak and powerless and appear to be deprived of vitality?]

To this Vasiṣṭha replies that he had been fasting for months, and the purpose of fasting is:

tā ma-rā ḥodāyī be 'avaž-e behešt dahad. (Rašīd al-Dīn 1433, f. 396v13)

[In order that God grants me the heaven as reward.]

A reader familiar with the history of Iranian languages will notice the unexpected etymological wordplay using the Sanskrit name of the protagonist Vasiṣṭha and the Persian *behešt* [heaven]. Etymologically, Sanskrit *vasiṣṭha* is the superlative of the adjective *vasu* [good]. New Persian *behešt*, inherited from Middle Persian *wahišt* ((*whšt*)), is ultimately derived from Proto-Iranian **Hwáhišt-Háhuš* (cf. Avestan *vahištō-anhuš-*), a compound of the superlative of **Hwásuš-* [good], cognate of Sanskrit *vasu* and **Háhuš-* [existence], literally “best existence” (Mayrhofer 1992–2011, s.v. *ásu-* and *vásu-*). It is also noteworthy that the Buddhist pursuit of awakening and liberation from the cycle of reincarnation is transformed into the pursuit of paradise in the Persian translation.

In comparison, the Tibetan *'Phags pa gnas 'jog gi mdo* only describes the exchange of greetings between the Buddha and Vasiṣṭha, without the Buddha rectifying Vasiṣṭha's method of fasting:

gnas 'jog khyod ci'i phyir 'di ltar skem zhing mdog mi sdug / ag tsom dang / skra dang / sen mo dang / spu ring zhing lus rtsub la gcom chung ngur smra / (Derge Kanjur, mdo sde, sa, 264a1–a3)

[Vasiṣṭha, why are you like this – emaciated and sallow, with a long beard, long hair, long nails, long body hair, ragged, and speaking so softly?] (*“The Sūtra of Vasiṣṭha,”* tr. Angowski 2023, 1.2)

Śākyamuni replies that fasting and hunger was not the correct way to reach heaven. Hunger is prone to cause rage and anger rather than “rightful thought and reflection” (*“andīše va-fekr va-neyyat-e dorost”*). The phrasing is reminiscent of the *āryaṣṭāṅga-mārga* or the eightfold rightful path of Buddhism: *samyag-dṛṣṭi* [right view], *samyak-saṃkalpa* [right intention], *samyag-vāc* [right speech], *samyak-karmānta* [right deed], *samyag-ājīva* [right livelihood], *samyag-vyāyāma* [right effort], *samyak-smṛti* [right mindfulness], *samyak-samādhi* [right concentration].

Having heard Śākyamuni's reply, Vasiṣṭha asks for clarification:

tū dānāyī ma-rā rahnomāyī va-eršād va-hedāyat kon. (Rašīd al-Dīn 1433, f. 396v17)

[Please give me guidance, direction, and instruction.]

Note that *eršād* [guidance] (Arabic stem IV verbal noun of the verbal root $\sqrt{R\dot{S}D}$ [to guide]) and *hedāyat* [guidance] (Arabic stem I verbal noun of the verbal root $\sqrt{HDY}$ [to guide]) are both derived from Arabic roots that are typically used to describe Allah guiding the way of Muslims.

In response, Śākyamuni enumerates the actions that Vasiṣṭha should swear to follow (Rašid al-Dīn 1433, f. 396v18–23):

- (i) *qaṣd-e māl va-asbāb-e motemallekān nakonam.*
[I do not desire wealth and possession of property.]
- (ii) *dorūg va-bohtān nagūyam.*
[I do not tell lie or false accusation.]
- (iii) *soḥan-e ḡobnī nakonam.*
[I do not say words of timidity.]
- (iv) *fasād va-fetne na-angīzam.*
[I do not provoke corruption and sedition.]
- (v) *šahve be-ḥalāl va-ḥarām narānam.*
[I do not express desire for permissible and forbidden things.]
- (vi) *harče mastī va-biḥodī konad naḥoram.*
[I do not consume anything that induces intoxication or ecstasy.]
- (vii) *raqs va-samā' nakonam.*
[I do not dance or sing.]
- (viii) *soḥanbāzī va-'ešq nagūyam.*
[I do not say playful or flirtatious words.]
- (ix) *āvāz-e motrebān va-sāz-hā našenavam.*
[I do not listen to the voice of musicians or musical instruments.]
- (x) *bū-ye hoš nabūyam va-bar andām namālam.*
[I do not smell perfume, and I do not apply it on my limbs.]
- (xi) *kesvathā-ye rangīn va-lebāshā-ye fāḥervanḡ va-nasiḡ-e nīkū napūšam.*
[I do not wear colourful clothes, fine dresses, and good textiles.]
- (xii) *bar taḥt va-sarīr va-astar va-oštor va-dīgar heyvānāt nanešinam.*
[I do not sit on a throne, sofa, mule, camel, and other animals.]
- (xiii) *āš va-gazā yek vaqt ḥoram pīš az zavāl-nazdīk-e nīmruz.*
[I eat pottage and food only once before midday.]
- (xiv) *āš-e pāk ḥoram ya'nī heyvānī-rā biḡān nakarde bāšand va ḡadā yekbār va-āb čand ān ke ḥ^vāham.*
[I eat pure pottage, i.e. animals have not been killed; meal only once but water as much as I want.]

The list generally matches the *uposatha* vows with eight branches in Buddhism. The following are the actions that one should abstain from when taking up an *uposatha* vow according to the Pali tradition, see, among others, *Aṅguttara-nikāya* (8.41, vol. 4, 249–251):

- (I) *pāṇātipāta* [killing living beings]
- (II) *adinnādāna* [taking what is not given]
- (III) *abrahmacariya* [sexual activity]
- (IV) *musāvāda* [false speech]
- (V) *surā-meraya-majja-pamādatthāna* [liquor, wine, intoxicants as the basis for heedlessness]
- (VI) *vikāla-bhojana* [eating outside the proper time]
- (VII) *nacca-gīta-vādita-visūka-dassana-mālā-gandha-vilepana-dhārana-mandana-vibhūsanatthāna* [dancing, singing, instrumental music, unsuitable shows, adorning and beautifying by wearing garlands, and applying scents and unguents]
- (VIII) *uccāsayana-mahāsayana* [high beds and big beds]

It is noteworthy that the Persian translation has expanded the original list of eight and changed some elements. For example, in the place of *musāvāda* [false speech] in the Buddhist version, the Persian version adds *soḥan-e ḡobnī* [words of timidity] and words provoking “corruption and sedition” (*fasād va-fetne*). *Adinnādāna* [taking what is not given] (i.e. stealing) is replaced by *šahve be-ḥalāl va ḥarām narānam* [I do not express desire for permissible and forbidden things], which draws on the opposition between the two categories of *ḥalāl* [lawful] and *ḥarām* [unlawful] in the Islamic *šarīʿa*. Interestingly, while the Buddhist original only decrees to avoid *uccāsayana-mahāsayana* [high beds and big beds], the Persian version also proscribes sitting on animals such as the *astar* [mule] or the *oštōr* [camel] that are typical of the geographical areas where Rašid al-Dīn was writing. This again shows Rašid al-Dīn’s effort to localise Buddhist elements and to integrate them into the natural environment familiar to his audience.

When Vasiṣṭha asks about the purpose of these actions, Śākyamuni answers:

tā dar īn ḡahān nafs-e tū berahad va dar ān behešt ḡāvedāne bāšad. (Rašid al-Dīn 1433, f. 396v23–249)

[So that your soul be liberated in this world and exist eternally in heaven.]

Note the juxtaposition of *īn ḡahān* [this world] and *ān behešt* [that heaven], which is reminiscent of the contrast between *hāḍihi al-dunyā* [this world] and *al-ʿāhira* [the last] in the Quran.⁶⁷ This transposes the Buddhist ideal of attaining *nirvāṇa* onto the Islamic goal of attaining the paradise in the afterlife.

This is also the transition from the second part of the *ḥekāyat* to the third part, in which Śākyamuni describes the names of Buddhist heavens, the life span of their inhabitants, and how many days in this world correspond to one day in the respective

⁶⁷ See Quran 16:30: *wa-qīla li-q-ḍīna ttaqaw māḍan ʿanzala rabbu-kum qālū ḥayran li-q-ḍīna ʿaḥsanū fi hāḍihi d-dunyā ḥasanatun wa-la-dāru l-ʿāhirati hayrun wa-la-niʿma dāru l-muttaqīna* [And it shall be said to the godfearing: “What has your Lord sent down?” They will say: “Good! For those who do good in this world good; and surely the abode of the world to come is better; excellent is the abode of the godfearing!”] (tr. Arberry 1955, 289).

heaven. The formula for introducing each heaven is exemplified by the heaven of *Cā-turmahārājakāyika* described below:

yek rūz be-d-īn šārāyeṭ rūze dārī beheštī yābī ke nām-e ān (sqvrmh'r'nk'yk)⁶⁸ ast ma'nt-ye īn kala-māt-e behešt ān-ast ke ta'alloq čahār-pādešāh dārad ke an-rā negāh mīdārand va paṅgāh sāl-e īn 'ālam yek rūz-e ān behešt bāšad va ahl-e ān behešt-rā be-d-ān rūz pānšad sāl 'omr bāšad va har sālī davāzdah māh va har māhī s[ī]⁶⁹ rūz va har rūzī paṅgāh sāl bāšad. (Rašīd al-Dīn 1433, f. 396v24–27)

[(When) you fast for a day under this condition, you will find the heaven named *Cā-turmahārājā-kāyika*. The meaning of this word of heaven is that it belongs to the four kings who protect it. Five hundred years in this world is one day in this heaven. The age of the inhabitants of this heaven is five hundred years. Each year consists of twelve months, each month consists of thirty days, and one day is equivalent to fifty years.]

Following this pattern, Śākyamuni introduced the heavens of *Cā-turmahārājakāyika*, *Trāyāstrimśa*,⁷⁰ *Yāma*,⁷¹ *Tuṣita*,⁷² (*Nirmāṇarati*),⁷³ and *Paranirmitavaśavartin*⁷⁴ in the *Kāmadhātu* [desire realm]. The account of heavens and their inhabitants that one reaches after practising the *uposattha* with eightfold branches exhibits structural parallels to the *Vitthātūposathasutta* in the Pali *Aṅguttara-nikāya* (vol. 4, 254–255).⁷⁵ It is said that the ruler of these six heavens is *Eblīs*:

pādešāh-e īn šeš behešt Eblīs ast va bar tamāmī-ye ahālī-ye īn behesthā ḥākem. (Rašīd al-Dīn 1433, f. 397r24–27)

[The king of these six heavens is *Eblīs* and he rules over all the inhabitants of these six heavens.]

As mentioned above, *Eblīs* or *Šayṭān* are used as names for *Māra*, who is the ruler of the *Kāmadhātu* in the Buddhist cosmology. A few lines later, the heavens in the *Kāmadhātu* are called *se gāne-ye Šayṭān* [the three realms of *Šayṭān*].⁷⁶

68 Transcription according to Rašīd al-Dīn (1433, f. 396r5). Transcribed as (stvrmh'r'dk'yk) in Topkapı Sarayı Hazine (1654, f. 346v3).

69 The manuscript reads سه *se* [three], but obviously سی *sī* [thirty] is intended.

70 Transcribed in Persian as (tr'kyš) in Rašīd al-Dīn (1433, f. 396v), and as (tr'ystnš) in Topkapı Sarayı Hazine (1654, f. 346v).

71 Transcribed in Persian as (y'm).

72 Transcribed in Persian as (tšt).

73 The name is mentioned neither in Rašīd al-Dīn (1433) nor in Topkapı Sarayı Hazine (1654).

74 Transcribed into Persian as (prynrvyrvšrvty).

75 From this point on, the days and life spans of inhabitants in each heaven become very chaotic in the Persian manuscript and disagree with the Pali version.

76 The manuscript reads سه *se* [three] in Rašīd al-Dīn (1433, f. 397r9), but this is probably a scribal error for شش *šēš* [six].

At the end, Śākyamuni introduced the seventeen heavens⁷⁷ of the *Rūpadhātu* [form realm] and the four heavens⁷⁸ of the *Ārūpyadhātu* [formless realm] in a less detailed manner, without specifying the name of each heaven. *Rūpadhātu* (lit. ‘realm of form’) and *Ārūpyadhātu* (lit. ‘realm of formlessness’) are respectively described as *ḡesmānī* [corporeal] (derived from *ḡesm* [body]) and *rūhānī* [spiritual] (derived from *rūh* [soul]). This calls to mind the dichotomy of body (*sōma*) and soul (*psuchē*) in Ancient Greek philosophy, which was transferred into Islamic philosophy through the Graeco-Arabic translation movement.

5 Case study: *Devatāsūtra*

Another Buddhist *sūtra* that Schopen (1982, 226) has identified is the *Devatāsūtra*, which is found in the sixteenth chapter of the Persian version (Rašīd al-Dīn 1433, f. 400v–401v) and the seventeenth chapter of the Arabic version (ed. Seleznyov 2020). Since the discovery of the Sanskrit manuscripts in Gilgit (ed. Mette 1981) and Potala (ed. Bhikṣuṇī Vinītā 2010, 264–303), and the Old Uyghur fragments in Turfan (ed. Zieme 2002), we now have at least six versions of this dialogue between a deity and the Buddha: Sanskrit, Tibetan (*lha’i mdo* [Sūtra of the Deity], Derge Kangyur, mdo sde, sa, 257a7–258b6),⁷⁹ Chinese (天請問經 *Tiān qǐng wèn jīng* [Sūtra of the Deity’s Inquiry], *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* T592), Arabic, Persian, and Old Uyghur. While it is certain that the Tibetan and Chinese versions were both translated from Sanskrit, there is no information concerning the immediate *Vorlage* [pretext] of the Persian and Arabic versions. The Arabic and Persian texts follow the order of verses of Chinese T592, but they contain verses found only in the Tibetan *lha’i mdo* version but absent from the Chinese. Despite many cultural translations that “Islamicise” the Buddhist elements, the Persian and Arabic versions generally agree with the Sanskrit, Tibetan, and Chinese versions in content, except that the order of questions and answers is slightly different in the Sanskrit and Tibetan versions. While the Sanskrit and Chinese texts are in poetic forms (Sanskrit in *śloka*, Chinese in 伽他 *jiā tā* [Gathā]), the Arabic and Persian translations are in prose. According to Zieme (2002, 228), the Old Turkic fragments were probably translated from Chinese. However, the Old Turkic fragments

⁷⁷ *Brahmapāriṣadya*, *Brahmapurohita*, *Mahābrahmā*, *Parittābha*, *Apramāṇābha*, *Ābhāsvara*, *Parittaśubha*, *Apramāṇaśubha*, *Śubhakṛtsna*, *Anabhṛaka*, *Punyaprasava*, *Bṛhatphala*, *Abrha*, *Atapa*, *Sudṛśa*, *Sudarśana*, *Akaniṣṭha*, according to the Buddhist cosmology.

⁷⁸ *Ākāśānantyāyatana*, *Vijñānānantyāyatana*, *Ākīṃcanyāyatana*, *Naivasamjñānāsamjñāyatana*, according to the Buddhist cosmology.

⁷⁹ In Silk’s (2019, 239–240) preliminary survey of Chinese *sūtras* in Tibetan translation, *lha’i mdo* belongs to the “questionable cases.” An English translation of the Tibetan text by Sakya Pandita Translation Team (“The Devatā Sūtra” 2024) and a comprehensive bibliography of primary sources are available. I thank the anonymous reviewer for this reference.

have additional parts that find no parallel in T592. It is uncertain whether the expansion points to a *Vorlage* different from T592, or if it was added by the Old Turkic translator. A fragment of the 天請問經 *Tiān qǐng wèn jīng* (T592), T II T Ch 5517, was also discovered in the Tarim basin.

The most remarkable cultural translations are the Persian *fereštegī* [angel] and Arabic *malā'ika* [angel], which are used in place of the Skt. *devatā* [deity], Tib. *lha* [god, deity], and Chin. 天 *tiān* [god].⁸⁰ Unlike all the other versions, in the Old Turkic fragments, it is a brahmin (Old Turkic *braman*⁸¹) rather than a deity that raises the questions to the Buddha. Zieme (2002, 232) suggests that the Old Turkic translator might have (mis)understood 天 *tiān* in Chinese as an abbreviation of 梵天 *fàn tiān*, which translates to Skt. *Brahman* and can easily be confused with Sanskrit *brāhmaṇa* [brahmin].

Furthermore, many typical terms of Buddhist ethics find their corresponding concepts in Persian and Arabic, for example Skt. *ajñāna* [ignorance] (Chin. 無智 *wú zhì*, Tib. *mi shes pa*) is rendered by Arab. *ǧahl* [ignorance] and Pers. *nādān* [ignorance]; Skt. *jñāna* [wisdom] (Chin. 智 *zhì*, Tib. *shes pa*) is rendered by Arab./Pers. *'aql* [reason, intellect]; Skt. *tyāga* [abandonment, donation] (Tib. *gtong pa*) is rendered by Arab. *sa-ḥāwa* and Pers. *ḡawānmarḏī* [generosity]; Skt. *puṇya* [merit] (Chin. 福 *fú*, Tib. *bsod nams*) is rendered by Arabic *'afāl al-ḥayr* and Pers. *kārhā ḥayr* [good actions]; Skt. (*paramaṃ*) *sukha* [(highest) happiness] (Chin. 樂 *lè*, Tib. *bde ba*) is rendered by Arab. *'atyab* and Pers. *ḥūštarīn* [best]; Skt. *pāpa* [evil] (Chin. 罪 *zuì*, Tib. *sdig pa*) is rendered by Arab. *ḍanb* and Pers. *gonāh* [sin]; Skt. *lobha* [greed] (Chin. 慳貪 *qiān tān*, Tib. *zhen pa*) is rendered by Pers. *ḥasad* [envy] and Arab. *buḥl* [avarice]; Skt. *kāma* [desire] (Chin. 欲愛 *yù ài*, Tib. *'dod*) is rendered by Pers. *donyāvi* [wordly, mundane] and Arab. *dunyā* [world].

In Śākyamuni's answer to the fourth question of the angel, the Buddhist concept of *śīla* [ethics, morality] is interpreted as “fear of God” in the Arabic and Persian translations:

Pers.: *Ḡawāb-e šākamūnī goft har ke qāne' ast wa be-kafāft raḍā šode āswade ast wa-har ke be-d-ānce dārad qāne' ast tawāngar ast šāhib libās an-ast ke taqwā še'ār ast wa-šalāhiyat detār-e ḥod sāhte ast wa har ke gūyad parhizgāram tawāngar-ast wa nabāšad sālūs ast.* (Rašid al-Dīn 1433, f. 401r1–3)

[Hereupon Shākamūnī gave the following answer: “He who is easily contented and is satisfied with his substance lives in peace; he who is content with his possessions is rich; a hypocrite is he **who wears the fear of God and virtue as his upper clothing**; a deceiver is he who avouches himself to be a fearer of God but is not such.”] (tr. Jahn 1965, lxiii)

⁸⁰ 天 *tiān* literally means ‘sky, heaven.’ In Chinese Buddhist translations, 天 *tiān* typically renders Sanskrit *deva* or *devatā*.

⁸¹ The Old Turkic form *braman*, ultimately loaned from Sanskrit *brāhmaṇa*, is possibly intermediated by a language similar to Gāndhārī *braṃmana*, Tocharian A *brāmaṇ* or Sogdian *pr'm()*n.

Arab.: 'ağāba Ṣākāmūnī man qana'a wa-raḏā bimā yakfīhi fa-huwa l-mustarīḥu l-qānī'u l-ğannīyu wa-ṣāhibu l-libāsi man ġa'ala **t-taqwā wa-ṣ-ṣalāhiyata diṭāra-hū** wa-man idda'ā 'annahū muttaqin wa-huwa kāḏibun fa-huwa sālūsun. (Rašīd al-Dīn 1314/1315, f. 2075r35–2075v1; cf. Seleznyov 2020, 247)

Skt.: *bhagavān āha / alpecchaḥ sukhito jñeyah saṃtuṣṭo parameśvaraḥ **śīlavām vibhūṣito** nityaṃ bhraṣṭaśīlo viḍāmbitaḥ.* (Mette 1981, 143)

Chin.: 天復請曰:少欲最安樂,知足大富貴,持戒恒端嚴,破戒常醜陋。(*Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* T592, p. 124c6–7)

Tib.: *bcom ldan 'das kyis bka' stsal pa / 'dod chung bde bar shes par bya / chog shes dbang phyug dam pa yin / **khirms ldan rtag tu rnam par brgyan** / tshul khirms nyams pa mtho btsams yin//* (Derge Kanjur, mdo sde, sa, 257b7)

The third hemistich in the Buddhist version stresses that one who possesses *śīla* (Chin. 戒 *jiè*, Tib. *khirms*) will always be well-clad. However, the Persian and Arabic versions interpret this negatively – one who shows fear of God (*taqwā*) and goodness (*ṣalāhiya*) only through superficial garb (*diṭār*) is deemed an impostor (Pers. *sāhte*) or a liar (Arab. *kāḏib*). The Buddhist concept of *śīla* is rendered by the Quranic term *taqwā* [fear of God], which connotes the moral virtue of piety, abstinence, and faith (Lewisohn 2012 [2004]).

In Śākyamuni's answer to the eighth question of the angel, the Buddhist pursuit of *mokṣa* [liberation (from the cycle of transmigration)] is interpreted as reading *al-Ḥaqq* (lit. 'the Truth'):

Pers.: *Ṣākāmūnī goft az ġavānmardī dūstān besyār šowand wa az dūstī namūdan-e došmanān kam wa az ḥodāyī **tarsī wa rāstī be-behešt rawand** wa cūn az 'aql-e koll begoḏarand **ḥaqq rasand**.* (Rašīd al-Dīn 1433, f. 401r20–21).

[Hereupon Śhākāmūnī replied: "Through generosity the number of one's friends increases and through friendship that of one's enemies decreases; through **piety and honesty** one enters Paradise and when one rises beyond innate intellect one **reaches God**."] (tr. Jahn 1965, lxiii)

Arab.: 'ağāba Ṣākāmūnī 'anna s-ṣaḥāwata sababun li-ziyādati l-'aṣḏiqā'i wa-bi-t-tawaddud "ilā l-ḥalqi yaqillu l-'a'dā'u **wa-l-'alāniyyatu wa-ṣ-ṣidqu** fī l-'umūri yudḥilāni l-ğannata wa-muḥāwaratu 'aqlu l-kulli wa-l-'ubūru 'anhu **yūṣilu 'ilā l-ḥaqqi**. (Rašīd al-Dīn 1314/1315, f. 2075v10–11; cf. Seleznyov 2020, 248)

Skt.: *bhagavān āha / tyāgān mitrāṇi vardhante maitryā śāmyanti śatravaḥ **śīlāt svargam avāp-noti jñānān mokṣaṃ ca gacchati**.* (Mette 1981, 145)

Tib.: *bcom ldan 'das kyis bka' stsal pa / gtong bas mdza' bshes 'phel bar 'gyur / byams pas dgra rnam s zhi bar byed/ **tshul khirms kyis ni mtho ris thob** / shes pas **thar par 'gro bar 'gyur** //* (Derge Kanjur, mdo sde, sa, 258a5)⁸²

82 There is no parallel of this verse in Chinese T592.

Similar to previous examples, Skt. *śīlāt svargam avāpnoti* (Tib. *tshul khrims kyis ni mtho ris thob*) [he reaches the heaven by means of morality] is rendered in Persian as *tarsī wa rāstī be-behešt rawand* [with fear (of God) and righteousness they go to heaven]. Skt. *mokṣaṃ ca gacchati* (Tib. *thar par 'gro bar 'gyur*) [he achieves liberation] is rendered in Persian as *ḥaqq rasand* and in Arabic as *yūṣilu al-ḥaqq* [he reaches al-Ḥaqq] (Yoeli-Tlalim 2013, 208). *Al-Ḥaqq* (literally 'the Truth') is one of the ninety-nine names of Allah in Islam (MacDonald and Calverley 2012 [1971]). In this way, the Buddhist goal of *mokṣa* [liberation] is reshaped as the Sufi ideal of coming close to Allah.

6 Conclusion

The Buddha biography in Rašīd al-Dīn's *Ġāmi' al-tawārīḥ* is an important vestige in Arabic and Persian literature that, following Rašīd al-Dīn's predecessors al-Bīrūnī and al-Šahrastānī, introduced Indian religions to the Islamicate world. With his *interpretatio Islamica*, Rašīd al-Dīn localised Buddhist ideas with equivalent Islamic concepts, which not only made Buddhism more accessible to his Muslim audience but also nativised Buddhism under the framework of Islam, aligning with the political ideology after the conversion of Ilkhanate from Buddhism to Islam. On the one hand, references to Indian deities are translated and transformed to fit an Islamicate cultural context: *Māla* in Buddhism becomes *Iblīs* or *Šayṭān* in Islam, Mount *Meru* becomes Mount *Qaf*, Skt. *deva* [god] becomes Pers. *ferešte* / Arab. *malā'ika* [angel], and the seven Buddhas of the past become '*anbiyā'* [prophets]. On the other hand, Buddhist technical terms are cited in their original Sanskrit forms, transcribed into Perso-Arabic script, and supplemented with etymological glosses introduced by *ya'nī* [that is]. Moreover, in the case studies presented above, we see that Buddhist practises and goals are adapted into an Islamic framework: following Buddhist ethics (Skt. *śīla*) becomes 'God-fearing' (Arab./Pers. *taqwā*), the pursuit of awakening (Skt. *bodhi*) and *nirvāna* becomes the pursuit of Paradise (Arab. *ġinna* / Pers. *behest*), attaining liberation from the cycle of rebirths (Skt. *mokṣa*) becomes approaching Allah (Arab. *al-Ḥaqq*). The form of Buddhism displayed in the *Ġāmi' al-tawārīḥ* reflects the multicultural, multilingual, and multireligious exchange on the Silk Road. Through the use of Central Asian Buddhist terms such as *burḥān* [Buddha], *Ḥanṣī* [Avalokiteśvara], *Qašūrdī* [Kanjur], *baḥṣī* [title of Buddhist monk], *nom* [dharma], the form of Buddhism in the *Ġāmi' al-tawārīḥ* reflects the cosmopolitan nature of Ilkhante, influenced not only by Indian Buddhism, but also by Tibetan, Chinese, and Uyghur-Mongolian Buddhism.

Abbreviations

Arab.	Arabic
Chin.	Chinese
Mong.	Mongolian
Pers.	Persian
Skt.	Sanskrit
Sogd.	Sogdian
Syr.	Syriac
Tib.	Tibetan

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