

"Our Word" – Foreign Advisers and the Western Diplomacy of the Early Ilkhans

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In the spring of 1262, a letter was written in the court of Hulegu Khan, addressed to Louis IX, the King of France. This letter – containing a sketch of a joint Mongol-European act against the Mamluk Sultanate in Egypt, and a suggestion for the safe keeping of Jerusalem for the Pope – is taken as a turning point in the course of the Mongol contacts with the West. Certain researches have credited this turn to the advice and encouragement of the Christians in Hulegu's court – friars, scribes and others. Yet was the proposed cooperation a turning point in the track of the Ilkhanid diplomacy? And whose hand marked that track? Was 'Our Word' the Ilkhan's, or his advisers'?

Going back in time, to another of Hulegu's contacts westwards – this time, the messages sent to the kings and sultans of Iran in 1255 – and then flying forward, to the diplomatic ventures of the following Ilkhan, Abaqa, in 1268 – this paper attempts to line an answer.