

## **“Animals in the Service of the Khan: The Postal System of the Mongol Empire and its Animals”**

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The medieval Mongols created the largest animal based communication system of world history. Postal stations were established from the Korean peninsula to the Volga region, from the forest zone to Persia. The postal system played a key role in maintaining the highest possible speed for civil and military communication and it was therefore a main tool in the establishment of a cohesive empire. Animals were a fundamental component of this system: different animals were employed in different regions; their acquisition and maintenance originated a complex set of regulations, economic and bureaucratic networks.

The paper analyses some aspects related to the animal component of the Mongol postal system. It firstly provides a philological analysis of the terminology used, by looking at a set of Chinese, Old Uyghur and Middle Mongolian documents, which are analysed here –comparatively- for the first time. Secondly, a broader analysis of the data combines it with historical and narrative sources. In doing so, the paper traces patterns and peculiarities of the economical and bureaucratic realities beyond the maintenance of the Mongol postal system. This will show the long term impact of the innovations and structures that the Mongol approach to and usage of animals brought in Eurasia.