

Witch-hunt and Politics at the court of the Mongol Khans in Mongolia and Iran: the migration of a political device

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In the mid-13th–early 14th cc. various sources written in different languages and belonging to different traditions documented a series of persecutions against alleged practitioners of witchcraft throughout the united Mongol Empire, as well as some of the successor Khanates. The “witchcraft” crime was considered so disgusting that even allowed the elimination of members of the *Golden Lineage*, who otherwise enjoyed certain immunity. Thus the witch-hunt became well attested even among the highest strata of the imperial elites.

Series of repressions against alleged practitioners of sorcery in the court of the Great Khan Möngke were documented by various sources and it seems that this practice was brought westward to Iran by the Great Khan’s brother Hülegü in the time of his campaign in the Middle East. Furthermore, later cases from the court politics of the Ilkhanat in the 1280-s display similarities with the events that took place in Mongolia several decades earlier, thus offering opportunity for a comparative research over the entanglement of politics and witchcraft in the court of the United Mongol Empire and the royal house of its Middle Eastern successor. Such investigation will seek to answer the question how much the witch-hunt processes in the Ilkhanat were influenced by the local cultural environment and to what extent they resembled the “original” events in Mongolia, or in other words, how Mongol was the witch-hunt phenomenon in the Mongol Imperial World.

The paper will be based mainly upon the Persian court chronicles of the Ilkhanids (Juvainī, Rashīd al-Dīn, etc.), the Latin travel accounts of Rubruck, as well as the Chinese dynastic cronicle *Yuan shi*.