



Mobility, Empire and Cross Cultural Contacts in Mongol Eurasia

Call for papers: **Diplomacy in the Age of Mongol Globalization**

Venue: May 30th-31st, 2016
The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

The Mongols are famous for their uncompromising diplomacy. “Submit or Perish” was apparently the main message they initially addressed to others. These calls for submission were claims made by conquerors and leaders of a universal empire. In most cases, they coincide with the period of the great Mongol expansion.

In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the Mongols developed various modes of official communication. Far from being static, they changed and adapted their diplomatic ways to the position they held in the surrounding world.

The ways the Chinggisids practiced diplomacy recall how relationships with neighbouring powers were negotiated in the nomadic world of Eurasia – a tradition that predates the Mongol empire. To trace the Turko-Mongolian precedents of these patterns of interaction is therefore fundamental to set Chinggisid diplomacy in the context of “Eurasian diplomacy”. The diplomatic scene was intended to set up a network of more or less formalized dependencies. Such a network was meant to determine with whom you could trade, with whom you could intermarry and against whom you would fight – which did not necessarily prevent the trade exchanges.

The rules of such interactions were flexible and could shift in a day (a case in point is the episode of Chinggis-khan’s merchants killed in Otrar).

One problem in examining the Mongols’ evolving relationships is that, while the diplomatic aims of the other sides (Papacy, Chinese, Rus’, Mamluks) are well documented, the diplomatic orientation of the Chinggisids is not. This conference will contribute to fill the gap. By looking at diplomatic exchanges both during the United Empire and after its dissolution to four Chinggisid states, the conference intends to individuate similarities, innovations and recurring patterns of diplomacy.

Seemingly, the Mongols had a clear-cut ideology of imperial domination and a basic diplomacy, but this was only one aspect of their strategies of negotiation. When necessary, they knew how to legitimate themselves in others’ terms; they were able to

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use Persian, Arabic, Turkish, Chinese, or Latin cultural frameworks, and they employed specialized personnel for this. The “Chinggisid diplomacy” was therefore, on the ideological level, the product of the imperial universal project, filtered through the cultural background of those individuals, whom they used as interpreters and translators.

In matters of *Realpolitik* on the other side, it resulted in a complex mix of establishing kinship ties and economic domination, of building a hierarchy of foreigners by giving interest to some and ignoring others. The criteria for this process were connected to matters of military organization and loyalty.

We invite our panellists to look at the following aspects:

A new world order and its rituals

The diplomatic world mirrors reality: the princely courts functioned as a magnifying glass where everything was emphasized, where rituals of everyday life became a matter of life and death (the interdiction of touching the threshold of the *ger*, for instance). This is because the imperial court was the expression of a new world order. Diplomacy was a way to position oneself within the new order. It built a shifting network of formal friends (which meant that they accepted the new order) and enemies (contesting or rejecting it). In this specific context, actions were sanctioned and structured by conventions and rituals.

Diplomatic personnel

The most important figure of diplomatic exchanges was of course the one of the envoys. This category is more open than we used to think. It included merchants, men of religion, translators and all types of go-between.

Another important group includes other specialists involved in the diplomatic process, such as translators, interpreters, scribes, etc.

Foreign policies

- long term and short term alliances = the Chinggisids' foreign policies
- the existence of divergent foreign political ambitions among the Mongol elite
- who dominated decision making at the periodically convening grand councils?

Gifts and trade

Diplomatic missions were an important channel for the transmission of luxury goods – in particular through the circulation of “gifts” expected and even demanded by rulers and elite members – but also of technical skills, knowledge and court fashion.

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-The history of diplomacy is not only about people but also about items. We should rethink the notion of “gifts” (the financial side should be emphasized) and the notion of extortion

- Diplomatic missions were also the occasion for unofficial trade.

The multi-faceted dimensions of the diplomatic encounter

-To combine the study of the geo-political interests and the study of the more personal stories of the envoys

-to use “external sources” like narratives made by the court visitors, foreigners (who understood nothing – like Rubruck with the gift system) and sources from inside, directly from the Mongols

-The concept of a “Chinggisid diplomacy”

Can we establish parallels, common patterns, common ideas? To which previous traditions did the Mongols refer? How did adaptation of forms, norms and rhetoric take place?

Submission of Abstracts

Abstracts for proposed papers (max. 250 words) should be sent to:

mongoldiplomacy@gmail.com

Deadline for submission is: **5th January 2015.**

Authors will be notified regarding acceptance of their contribution by **30th January 2016** at the latest, after all submissions have been reviewed.

Applicants are expected to arrange for their own funding for conference participation. A few selected participants may be funded (please state if you want to be considered for funding when submitting the abstract). Selected papers will be considered for publication in the workshop proceedings.

Organizers:

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