

Princess Sengge Ragi's Historic Gathering: Thoughts on Art and the Mongol Khanates

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Art played a vital role in the political and economic integration of the Mongol Empire. Effective political use of visual media required access to high quality material resources and the most skilled contemporary artists. Driven by desire to define and update elite social status, these efforts were intentional and coordinated. This paper explores the relationship of the four khanates to art as a social and political vehicle during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The Yuan dynasty and the Ilkhanate took the lead in this activity, while the Golden Horde and Chaghadai Khanate remained marginally involved. Several questions arise: how did local artistic traditions affect the role visual arts played in each khanate's political culture? How did Mongol policies and institutions contribute to artistic culture in different regions? How did inter-cultural dialogue emerge in this context and what was its impact? Princess Sengge Ragi, sister to two Yuan emperors, was a major art collector. Her story serves as a baseline for exploring the above questions in a comparative framework that considers developments in the four khanates.