

A Multi-Cultural Institution of Mongol Eurasia: the Chancellery of the Golden Horde and Ilkhanid Iran

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One of the most striking examples of cultural exchange in the Mongol Empire of the 13th–14th centuries is the institution of multilingual chancelleries. After the formation of the Empire, Mongolian became the official language that soon became also the most prestigious one. Mongolian was actually spoken by the Chinggisids, the Mongol aristocracy and the Mongol tribal warriors. The first Chinggisids, like their ancestor Chinggis himself, knew no other language than Mongolian.

After Chinggis' death (1227) subsequent to the establishment of the Empire Mongolian chancelleries sprang up all over the empire, from China to the East European region. This Mongol-language chancellery practice grew out of two roots: the Turkic-Uighur literacy of Turkestan (Uighur script, technical terms and chancellery style) and the Chinese chancellery traditions (use of quadratic seals and *paizi*, tablets of authorities).

In all parts of the Mongol territories Mongolian was the first official chancellery language in the initial period (middle of the 13th century), and local languages appeared in official use only towards the end of the 13th century, as for example, Turkic in the Golden Horde and Persian in Iran (the first Persian document known from the Ilkhanid period is dated in 1288). At any rate, the Mongol language survived in Ilkhanid Iran longer than in the Golden Horde where it totally disappeared by the end of the 13th century. Disregarding the short, stereotyped lines on the *paizi* (*baysa*), no single official document written in Mongolian has come down to us from the territory of the Golden Horde, since the cultural and linguistic absorption of the Mongols by the Turkic majority of the Golden Horde's population was much more rapid than their absorption in Iran by the Turkic and Persian media. In Ilkhanid Iran Mongolian was used in official diplomas throughout the whole period, moreover the Jalairid Shaykh Uways issued a Mongol decree as late as in 1358.

From the 1280s onward, Turkic became the official language of the Golden Horde. Unfortunately, no original Turkic documents have been preserved until 1381, but the contemporary (13th-14th centuries), authentic Russian, Latin and Italian translations of the by now lost originals yield a precious clue to restoring the original Turkic texts. On the basis of original Turkic documents of the late-14th-15th centuries and the above-mentioned translations, one may assert with a great degree of certainty that the original Turkic documents of the Golden Horde in the 13th-14th centuries must have been written in the Khwarezmian literary language of the period, with an apparent predominance of Kipchak lexical elements.

Basing on these assumptions the present paper attempts to scrutinise how the different linguistic and cultural layers intermingled in the chancellery practices of the above-mentioned two Chingissid states.