

## Against all odds: Mongol governing institutions in Medieval Iran (1253-1353)

Ilkhanate was a hereditary governing structure established in the second half of the 13th century in the western part of the Mongol empire, on the territory of modern day Iran. The dynasty was founded by Hulegu, a grandson of Chinggis Khan, the founder of what will become, after his 1206 feat of uniting the tribal forces of the steppe, an empire that lasted over a century. The political and administrative institutions of the *Ilkhanate* are of historical importance because they help explain how as a nomadic, tribal, and foreign to political traditions of the conquered land, Mongols not only won battle necessary to acquire new territories but were also successful in subsequently ruling them.

To date, historiography has tended to treat *Ilkhanate* as one of the many dynasties that came and perished on the territory of Iran, succumbing to the sedentary and more cultivated local tradition. Ann Lambton's classical work on the administrative history of medieval Iran has placed *Ilkhanate* in the long genealogy of Persian political tradition, effectively disconnecting it from its Mongol political and cultural context. Before founding the Ilkhanate, Hulegu has distinguished himself by overthrowing the Abbasid dynasty and sacking Baghdad in 1258, which was symbolically as devastating to the Muslims as the fall of the Constantinople was to the Eastern Christendom. In the aftermath of his victory and the death of his older brother Mongke, Mongol Empire was on the way to become the largest land empire of its time, ruling a territory from the Korean peninsula in the east to the Black Sea and present days Syria to the west. When his brother Qubilai succeeded on the throne, Hulegu decided to settle in Iran and establish a dynastic political structure called of the Ilkhanate, (meaning "subject" or "submissive") marking both a distinctive space as well as inscripting it into the larger empire who's supreme ruler he did not contest.

Despite considerable evidence to the contrary, Lambton suggested that Mongol rulers had little in the arsenal of political institutions that could help rule conquered territories. This gave birth to a historiographical current operating the assumption that Hulegu, and by extension Mongols, were skillful warriors and horseman but the actual business of running an empire and its administrative work was left to Persian notables. Some scholars have went as far as to suggest that even if Mongols wanted to implement their own political institutions they must have lacked capable personnel and as a consequence, any ostensible Mongol element was gradually replaced by local Persian customs. Based on this assumption and ignoring extant and widely-available Persian sources on Mongol viziers and administrators during the Ilkhanate period, historiography to date has exclusively focused on the Persian notables.

Contrary to current historiographical consensus, there were a considerable number of Mongol viziers and high officials in the Ilkhanate's institutions. Further Mongol influence can be found in the

keshig or personal guard/household government system, originally devised by Chinggis Khan and maintained by his successors as a central administrative organ of the empire as a whole. Taken together, numerous viziers and officials constituted an important influence and were vital part of the Persian bureaucracy.

The aim of this dissertation is to shed light on the administrative mechanisms of the Ilkhanate once Mongol rulers decided to settle in the Persian speaking territories. What were the administrative institutions developed in the aftermath of the initial conquests? What was the impact the local political and administrative tradition on the Mongol mechanisms of sedentary rule? In so doing, this dissertation seeks to understand the hybrid nature of bureaucratic mechanisms and hence restore Mongol heritage to the Iranian political tradition.

This study relies on the contemporary and posterior Persian primary sources such as *Jami' al-Tavarikh*, or “Collection of Histories” by Rashid al-Din Fazl Allah Hamadani, and *Tarikh-i Jahangusha* or “The History of the World Conqueror” of ‘Ala al-Din ‘Ata Malik Juvaini. In addition, it relies also on sources such as, Hamd-Allah Mustaufi's *Zafar-nama* or “The Book of Victory”, Ahmad-i Tabrizi's *Shahanshab-nama* or “The Book of King of Kings”, and *Dastur al-Kateb fi ta'yin al-marateb* or “Guidance for the Scribe for Definition of Degrees” by Mohammad Nakhjavani. In departure to classic histories of the Ilkhanate period, this study will use a number of sources of non-Islamic origin written in Chinese and Mongolian in order to bring broader perspective to the subject and provide fruitful comparisons with the situation across the Mongol Empire. Finally, where necessary, the study utilizes the narratives of the European visitors to the court of the Great Khans, as well as the contemporary writings of the Armenian historians such as of Kirakos Gandzakets'i, Hayton, and Grigor Aknets'i and the travel account of King Het'um I, whose accounts often bring particular insights on the views held by the outsider whose interest was intricately related with the rise and tide of the Ilkhanate.