

Universität  
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# Translation and Multilingualism in Mongol and Post-Mongol Eurasia

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University of Münster

*Abstracts & Bios*



# Translation and Multilingualism in Mongol and Post-Mongol Eurasia

## *Conference*

4–6 June 2025

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*Organised by Philip Bockholt (Münster)  
and Bruno De Nicola (Vienna)*

The conquests of Chinggis Khan in the thirteenth century marked the beginning of the establishment of the Mongol Empire in Eurasia. As rulers, the Mongols became known for their adaptability and openness to the customs and practices of most of the people they governed, and this played a pivotal role in shaping the linguistic and cultural landscapes of Eurasia. The empire's administration and communication systems required the translation of texts, the use of multiple languages, and the navigation of varied traditions and knowledge systems, which led to the development and institutionalisation of translation practices that were not only practical but also transformative, shaping the very fabric of Eurasian societies during and after the Mongol period. These linguistic and cultural dynamics did not disappear with the decline of the Mongol Empire but rather continued to flourish and evolve in successor states such as the Ottoman Empire, Timurid Central Asia, and Mughal India,

as well as other regions influenced by the Mongols, including China and Korea.

This workshop investigates the intricacies of translation and multilingualism in Mongol and post-Mongol Eurasia from the thirteenth to seventeenth centuries, analysing how texts, concepts, and knowledge traversed linguistic and cultural divides, as well as identifying the mechanisms that enabled effective communication and comprehension within a multilingual sphere. Viewing translation as an embodiment of knowledge transmission, it delves deeper into the subject of translation as a notion, procedure, and outcome, debating who transferred knowledge, when, and in what settings. Our investigation focuses on identifying what texts were translated and the contexts in which the translations occurred. We are also particularly interested in the functions performed by various languages when composing texts and their reciprocal influence within Eurasia's culturally diverse setting.

## Facilitating Governance across Languages: The Role of Multilingualism in the Ilkhanid Chancery

The Mongol conquests initiated a profound transformation in the chancery practices of the eastern Islamic lands, bringing East and Central Asian linguistic and bureaucratic customs into a well-established Perso-Islamic administrative tradition. This paper examines how the Ilkhanid chancery, grounded in Iranian models, integrated Turko-Mongol and Chinese bureaucratic practices to meet the multilingual and cross-cultural needs of the empire. In particular, I explore how the Ilkhanid administration strategically adapted these diverse traditions to facilitate governance, address the multilingual makeup of its subjects, and construct a shared chancery framework. Focusing on the diplomatic dimensions of this multilingualism, I analyse the synthesis of Persian and Turko-Mongol elements within monolingual and bilingual state documents. These documents, which include decrees, letters, and other official communications, reveal how the strategic use of translation and linguistic adaptation bridged Perso-Islamic practices and Turko-Mongol customs within a unified administrative framework. By examining material and textual features—including the use of seals, distinctive formats such as the *elevatio*, annotations, and registration marks—I aim to illuminate the methods by which the Ilkhanid chancery created a culturally negotiated administrative identity. Through these findings, this paper seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of the pragmatic role of multilingualism in shaping administrative practices in the Mongol and post-Mongol

periods, complementing insights presented by Márton Vér on related aspects of administrative multilingualism.

**András Barati** is a post-doctoral researcher at the Austrian Academy of Sciences, where he is contributing to the project “Entangled Charters of Anatolia (1200–1300)”. His research focuses on Persian diplomatics, chancellery practices, and the administrative history of medieval Iran. András recently authored his first monograph, *Exercising Authority and Representing Rule*, published by Brill.

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## Turco-Persianate Linguistic Performativity in the Abū'l-Khayrid Dynasty

The majority of illustrated manuscripts produced in Transoxiana between 1500 and 1599, when the neo-Chinggisid Abū'l-Khayrids (commonly known as Shaybanid Uzbeks) administered the region, were copied in Persian. This paper offers an overview of the few illustrated Turkic-language manuscripts made for Abū'l-Khayrid elites. Its diachronic scope covers written trends throughout the dynasty and asserts and explains key claims. Although the first leader, Muḥammad Shaybānī Khan (r. 1500–1510), claimed proficiency in composing Arabic, Turkic, and Persian poetry and had a few biographies commissioned in Persian and Tūrki, other early administrators were more Turkic in their literary tastes, preferring the works of Navā'i and having texts of classical Persian poetry and history translated into Tūrki. However, by the time we get to the manuscripts commissioned by the mightiest ruler, 'Abdullāh b. Iskandar Khan (r. 1557–1598), the use of Tūrki completely declines in manuscript production, and Jāmi's Persian titles thoroughly eclipse those of Navā'i. As a point of comparison, diplomatic correspondence was conducted in both Tūrki and Persian across the century in which the Abū'l-Khayrids held power, but the predilection for Persian manuscript patronage supplanting Turkic works later in the lifespan of the dynasty points to a refashioning of social, cultural, and political self-presentation that goes beyond a mere linguistic shift. We see how, in the early-modern period, the vehicle of language in itself not only transmitted meaning but conveyed socio-cultural status, with Persian continuing to be associated with high courtly culture as it had for centuries, but significantly in this age, it reflected aspirations to achieve centralised rule.

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tions and the Arabic and Persian languages. She obtained her first MA from the Williams College Graduate Program in the history of art (Massachusetts, USA), and her second MA from The Courtauld Institute of Art (London, UK), where she studied the Mongol through Safavid book art, predominantly from Iran. After a year in Tajikistan while on a Fulbright Research Grant, she completed her PhD at Leiden University's Institute for Area Studies: Persian & Iranian Studies (2022). She wrote her dissertation on illustrated epic and biographical manuscripts of the Abū'l-Khayrids and their diplomatic exchanges between courts within Central Asia and the broader Turco-Persianate sphere encompassing Safavids, Ottomans, and Mughals. She has also held visiting fellowships at the Oxford Nizami Ganjavi Centre (Oxford, UK) and the Warburg Institute (London, UK). She is currently a Leverhulme Early Career Fellow in the Department of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies and a Junior Research Fellow at New College at the University of Oxford from 2024 to 2026.

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## Translating Shiite Ritual into Turkic in Safavid Iran

The paper discusses the politics of ritual and translation in Safavid Iran, comparing three Turkic renderings of Ḥusayn Vāʿiz-i Kāshifī's (d. 1504) paradigmatic martyrology, the *Rawḥat al-shuhadā*, a foundational text of Twelver Shiite piety and ritual. I argue that these translations, i.e., Fuzūlī's (d. 1556) *Ḥadiqat al-suʿadā*, Nashāti's 1538 *Shuhadānāma*, and Rīzā Khāksārī's *Jinān al-muʾminīn* from the late seventeenth century, were heavily informed by the political and religious culture of their time. They offer a spectrum of piety ranging from confessional ambiguity and Sufism, in the case of Fuzūlī and Nashāti's respective work, to a more programmatic and confessionally unambiguous Twelver Shiism in the case of Rīzā Khāksārī's paraphrase. I will also demonstrate that this last work was greatly inspired by the Safavid court's ultimately unsuccessful attempts to define and control piety and ritual among their Turkophone followers, the Qizilbash.

**Ferenc Csirkés** (PhD, The University of Chicago, 2016) is an assistant professor in the history of the pre-modern Islamicate world at the University of Birmingham. Previously, he has worked at Simon Fraser University in Canada, Sabancı University in Turkey, the University of Tübingen in Germany, and Central European University in Hungary. He is a cultural, literary, and intellectual historian of medieval and early modern Iran, the Ottoman Empire, and Central Asia. His research straddles the larger Persianate and Turkic worlds, exploring the political, cultural, and social role of Muslim Turkic/Turkish (Ottoman, Chaghatay, Azerbaijani) literary traditions against their Persian and Arabic backgrounds.

He studies empire, cosmopolitanism, religious and ethnic identities, and processes of confessionalisation and vernacularisation in the late medieval and early modern periods.

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## Speaking Chinese, Translating Persian: Strategies of the Autograph Manuscript of ‘Alī Akbar Khaṭāyī’s *Book of China*

**H**istorians of both China and the Muslim world have long been aware of the account of the Transoxianan merchant ‘Alī Akbar Khaṭāyī (fl. 1500–1520), who travelled to the Ming Dynasty capital of Beijing and lived there for many years. Caught up in the Safavid conquest that seized control of his home region upon his return, he fled westward to the Ottoman capital of Constantinople. There, he presented the Ottoman court with an account of his experiences that aimed to inform the Ottoman Sultan Selīm I about his distant imperial counterparts. This account came to be known as the *Khaṭāynāme* or “Book of China.” Our standard historiography of the production of Khaṭāyī’s account holds that the work was first composed in the author’s native language of Persian sometime between 1516 and 1520, and that it was translated into Ottoman Turkish only decades later in 1582 during the subsequent reign of the Ottoman Sultan Murād III (r. 1574–1595). However, recent research on the various surviving manuscripts of Khaṭāyī’s work has uncovered that one surviving manuscript is not a copy of this later translation. It is instead the sole surviving autograph of ‘Alī Akbar Khaṭāyī himself. It provides additional descriptions of Ming Dynasty politics and society not found in any other manuscript, and most striking of all, it illustrates that Khaṭāyī had linguistic skills in both Chinese and Ottoman Turkish. This paper examines how the contents of this manuscript sought to convey his ideas about China to an Ottoman audience.

**John J. Curry** is an associate professor in the Department of History at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, where he has taught since 2006. He graduated from Northwestern University with a BA in history in 1992 and subsequently received a dual MA in both history and Arabic language (1998) and a PhD in history (2005) from The Ohio State University. He specialises in the history of the early modern Ottoman Empire,

Islamic studies, and world history. He is the author of *The Transformation of Muslim Mystical Thought in the Ottoman Empire: The Rise of the Halveti Order, 1350–1650* (Edinburgh University Press, 2010), and the co-editor of *Sufism and Society: Arrangements of the Mystical in the Muslim World 1200–1800* (2012). He was one of three translators for the *Cihānnümā* of the Ottoman scholar Kātib Çelebi (d. 1657), the longest work in Ottoman Turkish ever to be translated into English, published as *An Ottoman Cosmography* (2021). Most recently, he has worked as part of a team on a National Endowment for the Humanities project to create an annotated translation of the *Khaṭāynāma* (“Book of China”) of ‘Alī Akbar Khaṭāyī.

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## Translating Wisdom. Revisiting the *Mujmal al- Ḥikma* and its Role in the Multilingual Dynamics of Medieval Eurasia

**T**he *Mujmal al-Ḥikma* is a key but understudied Persian adaptation of the Arabic *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*. Our research revisits the origins and composition of the *Mujmal*, questioning the exact place and time it was created and its reception in later periods, particularly during the Ilkhanid and Timurid eras. We will trace how the *Mujmal* evolved as a product of translation and adaptation, blending the author's individual insights with the larger intellectual trends of the Ilkhanid period. Focusing on the classification of the sciences in both the *Rasā'il* and the *Mujmal*, we will underline the importance of manuscript analysis to understand the practices of translation and the multilingual dynamics that shaped medieval Eurasia, highlighting the complex interactions between texts, languages, and cultures of the time.

**Godefroid de Callataÿ** is Professor of Arabic and Islamic Studies at the Oriental Institute of the University of Louvain (UCLouvain), specialized in the history of science and philosophy. Amongst other subjects, he has published extensively on the encyclopaedic corpus known as *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* (Epistles of the Brethren of Purity). He is also the correspondent PI of the ERC Synergy project MOSAIC (Mapping Occult Sciences Across Islamicate Cultures, 2025–2031), now about to start at UCLouvain, UNIBO (Bologna), FAU (Erlangen-Nürnberg), USC (South Carolina), and UAB (Barcelona).

**Laura Tribuzio** conducts research at the Oriental Institute of UCLouvain, where she explores the classification of sciences and the interplay between mathematical and occult disciplines. Her work centres on Arabic, Judeo-Arabic, and Persian manuscript traditions, with a focus on the transmission of scientific and esoteric knowledge from the Graeco-Arabic world to medieval Latin Europe.

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## A Star Travelling the Sky and a Concept Traversing Languages: Exploring Some New Arabic, Persian and Turkish Manuscripts Dealing with *Şigir Yulduz*

This paper deals with a star that never existed yet was found wandering across (post-) Mongol Eurasia under a perplexing plethora of names, such as Turkic *Şigir Yulduz*, Persian *Sakizildiz*, Russian *Çigir*, and Georgian *Şukur-Varsk'vlavi*. Continuing where the seminal work of Geoffrey Lewis and Timothy Paul Grove left off, I present some twenty newly discovered Arabic, Turkish and Persian manuscripts, now called *Najm al-Shukur*, *Sitāra-i Shūkūr* and *Şükür Yulduzu* respectively, that discuss this ghost star. While tracing the star's trajectory across Eurasia, I explore how the concept crossed one linguistic and cultural divide after the other, how it was adapted to fit its new environments, and which actors were involved in this near-global transfer of astrological knowledge.

**Kristof D'hulster** is a postdoctoral research associate of the “TRANSLAPT” project at the University of Münster. Following his PhD on Turkic socio- and contact-linguistics (KULeuven, 2010), he worked with the Research Foundation, Flanders (FWO), on ERC projects in Ghent, Birmingham and Jena, and as a Humboldt fellow at the University of Bonn. Within TRANSLAPT, while engaging with the socio-political and cultural history of the pre-modern Islamic world at large, he focuses on the role of translation in the shaping of Western Turkic literacy. His main publications are the monographs *Browsing through the Sultan's Bookshelves. Towards a Reconstruction of the Library of the Mamluk Sultan Qānişawh al-Ghawri* (Bonn University Press, 2021), and *Ottoman Poets and Poetics in the Sixteenth Century: Introducing Aşık Çelebi's and Latîfî's Biographical Dictionaries* (E.J.W. Gibb Memorial Series/Edinburgh University Press, in press).

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## Knowledge Transmission through Translation: Persian-Chinese Glossaries and Textual Practices in Post-Mongol China

**M**ultilingual texts produced in Mongol and post-Mongol China are essential sources for understanding the cross-regional transmission of knowledge and expertise. This paper examines the Persian-Chinese glossaries (*huihui guan za zi*) and the sample translation texts (*lai wen*) produced by the Translation Bureau of the Ming dynasty in the fifteenth century. By exploring the circumstances of their production, the structure of the glossaries, the categories and volumes of major vocabulary sets, and the specific terms included, this study discusses the nature and functionality of these glossaries and translated texts in the post-Mongol context. The vocabulary reflects knowledge significant not only for diplomatic purposes but also for the transfer of expertise in fields such as technology, astrology, and medicine, while the sample texts shed light on the methods and purposes of translation practices at the time.

Additionally, this study compares these Persian texts produced at the Ming court with earlier Persian texts and inscriptions from the Mongol-Yuan period, tracing the (d)evolution of Persian language use in China between the thirteenth and seventeenth centuries. This research considers the multilingual environment under Mongol rule as complex and dynamic, contributing to ongoing discussions of Mongol legacies in Eurasia, enriching and complicating scholarly debates on the role of Persian as a *lingua franca* in the Mongol Empire.

**Carol Fan** is a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Bonn, working for the project “Dynastical Genealogies: The Visualization of Historical Imagination and Political Legitimacy in the Islamic World”. Her research has a trans-regional and trans-political focus, engaging with textual cultures in Arabic, Persian, Chinese, and various European archives to rethink and re-situate the importance of the Mongol period in Muslim history and society across Eurasia. She is particularly interested in exploring the relationships between kinship structure, bureaucracy, and management of vast territories as a network of alliances. Her current monograph project, “The Chinggisid Co-op: Delegation of Power and Distribution of Resources within the Mongol Empire,” examines the military and administrative networks constructed by Chinggis Khan and his descendants across the empire’s extensive and expanding territory. Her recent publication, *The Timurid Regions and Moghulistan through the Eyes of a Ming Diplomat*, analyses the diplomatic exchanges between China and the Persianate Islamic regions in the post-Mongol world and provides an annotated translation of the fifteenth-century Chinese diplomat’s reports of Iran and Central Asia.

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## Types and Functions of the Multilingual Official Documents under the Mongol-Yuan Empire: Mongolian and Chinese Bilingual Forms

This paper examines the types and characteristics of Mongolian and Chinese official documents among the multilingual official documents of the Mongol-Yuan Empire. Mongolian-language decrees and administrative documents issued to China were typically translated into Chinese language using a unique translation style known as the Mongolian Literal Translation Style (*Chokuyaku-tai; Zhiyi-ti*). Although rendered in Chinese characters, the syntactic structure retained Mongolian elements, resulting in a language form that can be defined as “Sino-Mongolian.” Therefore, while these documents may initially appear to be monolingual, they are effectively bilingual in that they blend Mongolian and Chinese language elements. Mongolian-language documents circulated in China and the surrounding areas in four distinct forms: (1) documents solely in Sino-Mongolian; (2) documents transcribed in Sino-Mongolian or standard Chinese, with additional Mongolian notes; (3) documents in a parallel bilingual format with both Mongolian and Sino-Mongolian texts; and (4) documents that cite Sino-Mongolian texts, but with the main body transcribed in standard Chinese. Therefore, while forms (1) and (4) may initially appear monolingual, all four forms should be regarded as bilingual due to their integration of Mongolian and Chinese linguistic elements. By clarifying the characteristics and functions of each of these forms, this study aims to contribute to a systematic understanding of the multilingual document system of the Mongol-Yuan Empire.

**Yoshiyuki Funada** is an associate professor of Asian history at the Graduate School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Hiroshima University, Japan. His main research interests include ethnic groups, official documents and stelae, translation practices, language textbooks, and the relationship between Mongol rulers and local societies in China under the Mongol Empire, including the

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## **Tarjuma-yi Kitāb-i Bārāhī and Knowledge Transmission in Early Islamicate South Asia**

**R**ecent research on Indo-Persian translations has primarily concentrated on the Mughal period (1526–1857). Particular attention has been given to the works produced under Akbar (r.1556–1605) and Dārā Shikūh (1615–1659), as well as translation practices in Kashmir. However, manuscript evidence indicates that translation activities, especially from Sanskrit into Persian, were already underway during the Delhi Sultanate (1206–1526). Among these, the *Tarjuma-yi Kitāb-i Bārāhī* (c. 1358–1388), a Persian translation of the *Brhatsaṃhitā*, stands out. Composed by Varāhamihira during the Gupta era (c. 240–550), the *Brhatsaṃhitā* is a classical Sanskrit work characterised by its comprehensive astrological and prognostic knowledge. The production of the Persian translation aligns with the Delhi Sultanate's interest in scientific knowledge. This study applies the perspectives of philology and translation studies to examine how the translator interpreted the intensive Indic knowledge and embedded cultural implications of the Sanskrit original. It further explores whether the Persian translation inherited the intellectual legacy of early Indo-Islamic scholars, such as al-Bīrūnī (d. 1048), in terms of their engagement with Indian knowledge systems. Thus, drawing on the Sanskrit original, the Persian translation, and the early Arabic passages of the same work, this study analyses the translation and transmission of knowledge from the *Brhatsaṃhitā*. This investigation into early Islamicate South Asian translation practices contributes to our

understanding of the broader trajectory of Indo-Persian translation history.

**Lingli Li** is a PhD candidate at the University of Göttingen and the École des hautes études sociales. Her fields of interest are the cultural history of medieval South Asia, the history of science, Indo-Persian translation studies, and Sanskrit literature. Her first articles are currently under review.

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## Multilingual Encounters in the Buddha Biography in Rashīd al-Dīn's *Compendium of Chronicles*

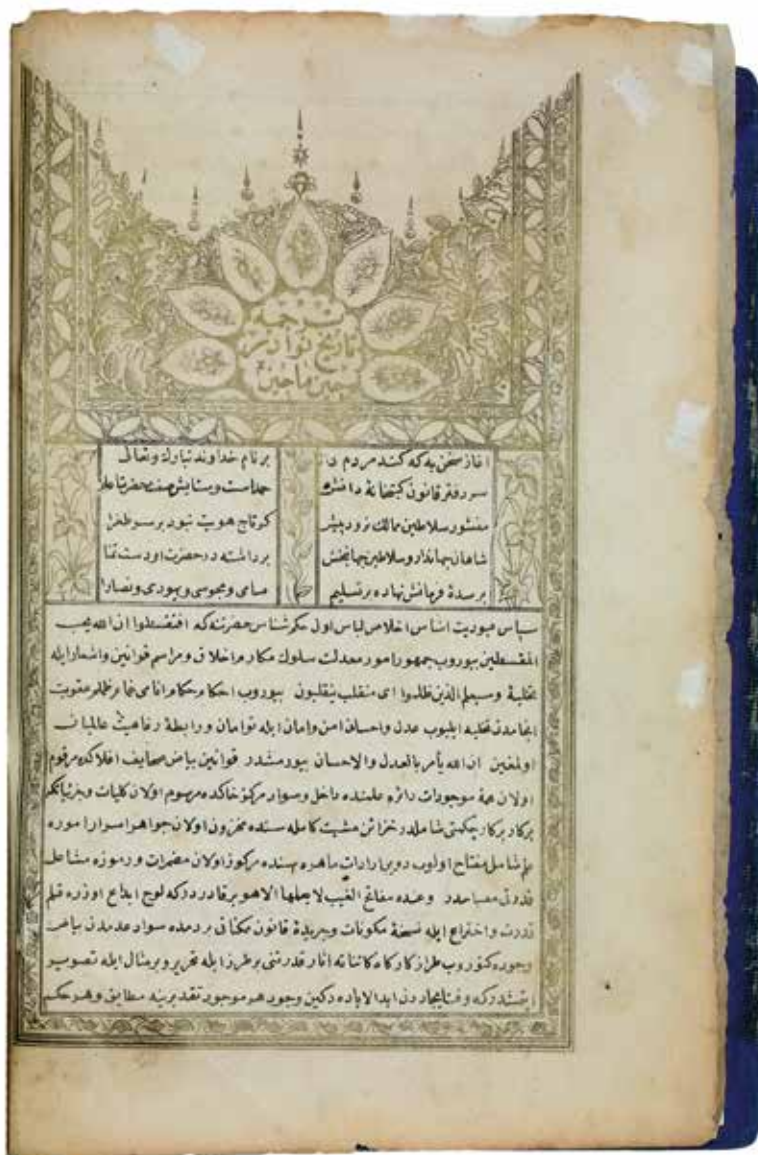
The *History of India* in Rashīd al-Dīn's *Jāmi' al-tavārīkh* 'Compendium of Chronicles' contains Persian and Arabic translations and paraphrases of the Buddha's biography. Many parts of the Buddha's biography find parallels in the Buddhist canons in Tibetan, Chinese, Pali, or Sanskrit, and some of them have been traced to a specific source, e.g. *Āryavasiṣṭhasūtra*, which is embedded as a *ḥikāya* in Chapter 7, and *Devatāsūtra*, which is embedded in Chapter 17. The translation strategy of the Buddha biography can be classified into two main approaches. On the one hand, the translator(s) often replace the Buddhist pantheon with their Islamic equivalents, e.g. Sanskrit *deva* 'god' or Tibetan *lha* 'god' is replaced by Persian *firishtag* 'angel' or Arabic *malak* 'angel', Buddhist demon *Māra* is replaced by *Shayṭān* or *Iblīs* 'Satan'. On the other hand, Buddhist proper names and technical terms are transcribed in Perso-Arabic script, reflecting origins in different languages, e.g. *kwanshi* 'Avalokiteśvara' (from Chinese 觀世 *Guānshì*), *nom* 'dharma' (from Old Turkic *nom*), *burkhān* 'Buddha' (from Old Turkic *burhan*). The present paper focuses on the *Devatāsūtra* in Rashīd al-Dīn's *Compendium of Chronicles* from the perspective of contact linguistics and translation studies, examining how various Buddhist literary traditions (Tibetan, Chinese, Indic, Old Turkic, Mongolian) converge in this work and find their way into translations into Persian and Arabic.

translations on the Silk Road. Her dissertation project researches Arabic, Georgian, and Greek translations of *Barlaam and Josaphat*, a collection of Buddhist *jātaka* stories transmitted into the West.

**Chia-Wei Lin** is an assistante diplômée and doctoral student at Section de langues et civilisations slaves et de l'Asie du Sud, Université de Lausanne. She has received a BA (2021) in Classical Philology and South Asian Studies from Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg and two MAs (2023) in Indo-European Linguistics and Arabic Studies from Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena. Her research interests include historical linguistics, language contact, indigenous grammatical traditions, and Christian and Buddhist

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‘Ali Akbar Khatāyī’s *Khaṭāy-nāme*, opening page.

This opening page of the lithograph of the Turkish translation of ‘Ali Akbar Khatāyī’s *Khaṭāy-nāme* (‘Book of China’) was printed in Istanbul in 1270/1854. The work, a description of Ming China, was originally written in Persian between 1516 and 1520, with its translation into Ottoman Turkish being completed in 1582.





*Hadikati'l-Ulyā* Uppsala University Library, O Cels. 7, ff. 1v–2r.

Persian historiography thrived under the Timurids in Iran and Central Asia, with Mirkhvānd's universal history, *Rawzat al-Safā* ("The Garden of Purity"), being a prominent example. The work was translated into Ottoman Turkish on multiple occasions. This copy represents the second volume of the earliest known complete translation, *Hadikati'l-Ulyā* ("The Garden of Paradise") produced by Muṣṭafā b. Ḥasanṣāh for the Ottoman grand vizier Rüstem Paşa between 957–960/1551–1553. © Uppsala University Library





Cenābī Muṣṭafā Efendi's *Cevāhirü'l-Garā'ib*, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi,  
Gönenli Mehmed Efendi, 2, f. 2r.

Cenābī Muṣṭafā Efendi translated a number of texts from Arabic to Ottoman Turkish. He compiled these into a single volume called *Cevāhirü'l-Garā'ib* ("The Jewels of Wonders"), which he then dedicated to Sultan Murad III (r. 1574–1595).  
© Süleymaniye Yazma Eser Kütüphanesi

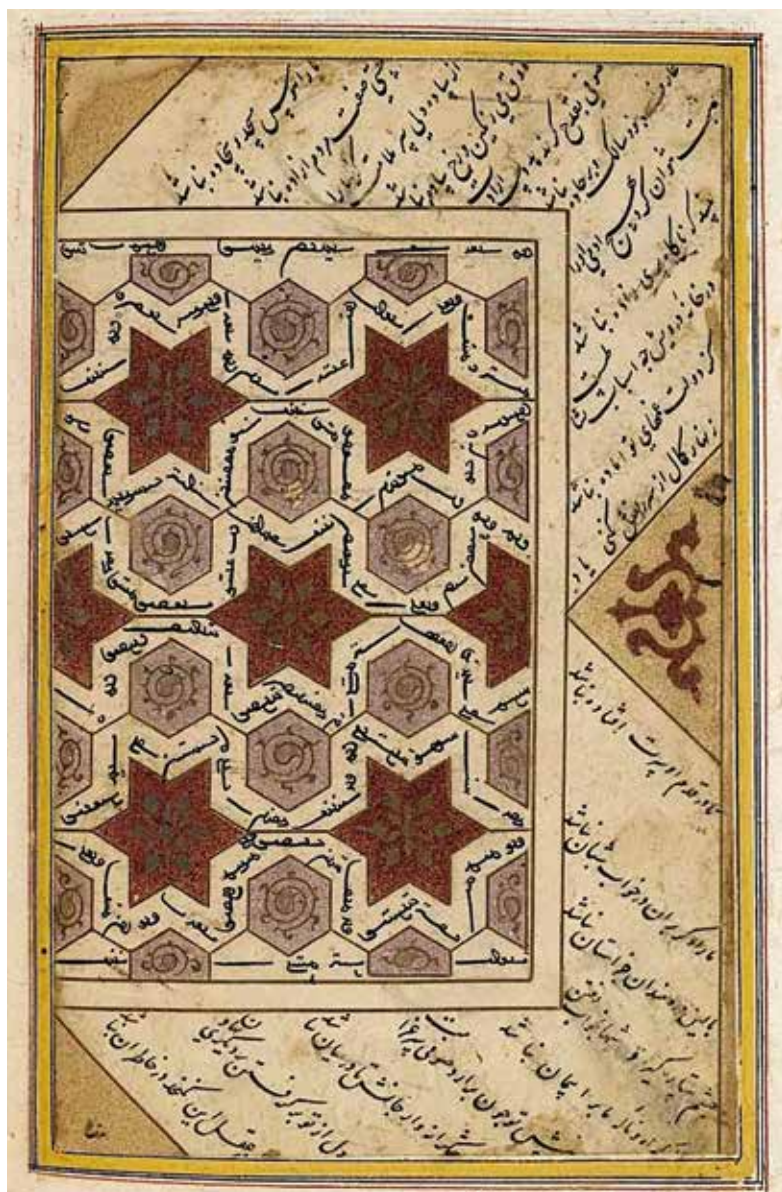


*Jingang jing*, Harvard Yenching Library, Rare Book, TMO 1818 8724.

A Qing blockprint of a set of translations of the *Diamond Sutra*, with an undated preface by Emperor Qianlong. Quadrilingual, the print combines Chinese, Manchu, Mongolian, and Tibetan. © Harvard University







The Yazd Anthology, British Library, Or. 8193

The Yazd Anthology, written for a military commander in Timurid Yazd in 835/1431, combines Turkic texts of a variegated nature in Uyghur script with Persian poetry by Kamāl al-Dīn Khujandī and Amīrī in Arabo-Persian script. © British Library



### The Stele of Sulaiman, with a hexaglot inscription.

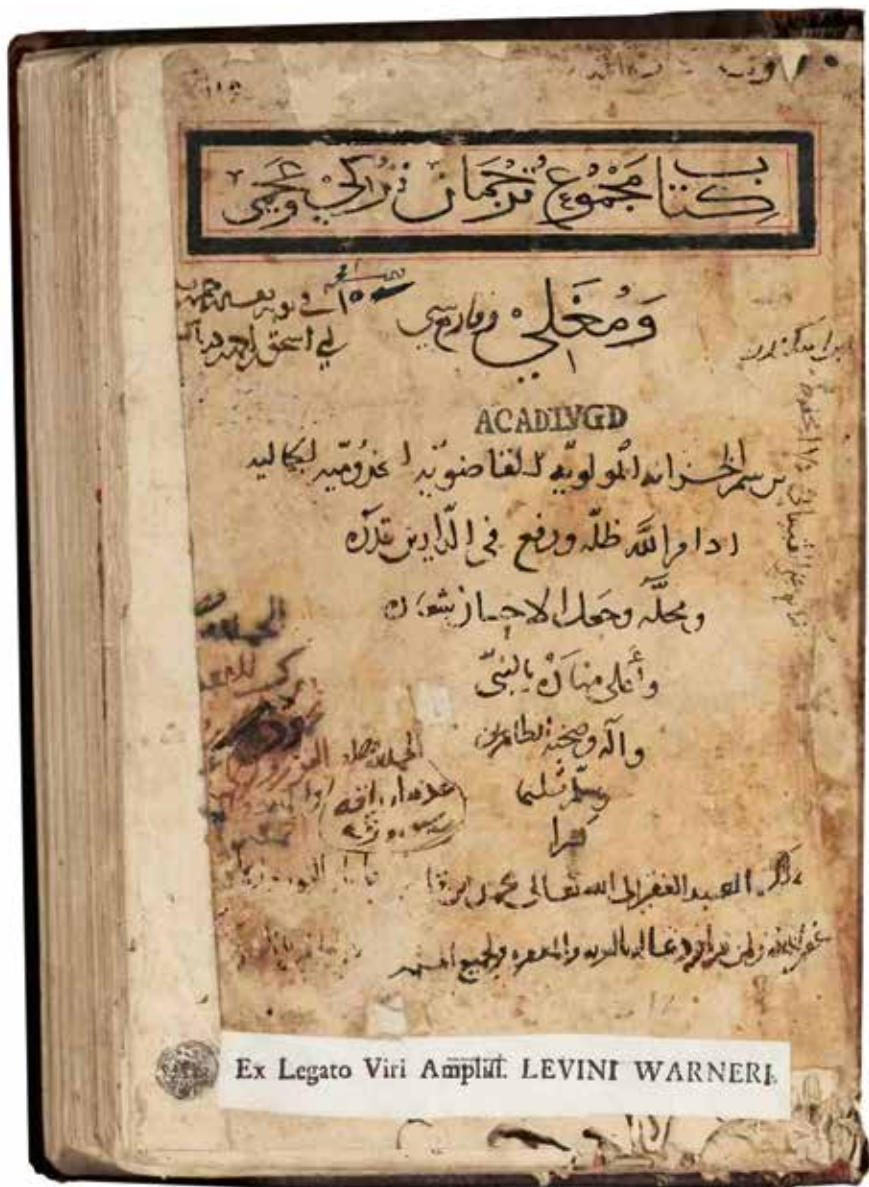
This stele was erected in 1348 at a Buddhist temple in the Mogao Caves, East China, and it is named after one of the temple benefactors, Sulaiman, a fourth-generation descendant of Genghis Khan's brother Temüge. Surrounding a *bodhisattva*, the Buddhist mantra *Om mani padme hum* is inscribed in six different scripts (Ranjana, Tibetan, Uyghur, 'Phags-pa, Tangut, Chinese).

© Dunhuan Academy









*Kitāb-i Mecmū'ī Tercümān-i Tūrki ve 'Acemī ve Muḡalī*, title page,  
 Leiden University Libraries, Or. 517, f. 1r.

A unique MS that contains an Arabic-Turkic lexicon and grammar, as well as a Mongolian-Persian and Arabic-Mongolian lexicon, authored or copied in fourteenth-century Mamluk Egypt. © Leiden University Libraries

## Tarjuma as a Rhetorical Figure during the Reigns of the Seljuqs and the Ilkhanids

**T**arjumān al-Balāgha, written by Muḥammad b. ‘Umar Radūyānī in the twelfth century, identifies *tarjuma* as a powerful rhetorical device that enhances eloquence and enriches literary expression. Radūyānī emphasises that the most effective forms of *tarjuma* are those that stay true to the original meaning, ensuring a faithful representation of the text’s content. In Persian literary tradition, *tarjuma* appears in two key forms: as a translation of Arabic verses into Persian poetry and a translation of Arabic prose – often of a didactic nature – into Persian verse. Persian authors and poets, eager to demonstrate their literary skill and make Arabic texts more accessible to a wider Persian-speaking audience, frequently employed this technique. Among those who utilized *tarjuma* in their works are notable figures such as ‘Alī b. Sulaymān Rāvandī, who composed *Rāḥat al-Ṣudūr va Āyat al-Surūr* in the early thirteenth century, and ‘Abdallāh b. Faḡlallāh Shīrāzī, better known as Vaṣṣāf, who incorporated this device into his *Tārīkh-i Vaṣṣāf* a century later. This study seeks to examine the use of *tarjuma* in the works of these influential figures, offering insight into the literary and rhetorical functions of *tarjuma* in twelfth to thirteenth century Iran and its role in the development of Persian literary traditions.

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## A Compilation of Translations for a Sultan: *Cenābī's Cevāhirü'l-Ġarā'ib*

**C**enābī Muṣṭafā Efendi (d. 1590) is best known as one of the major Arabic language chroniclers of the Ottoman Empire and the author of the widely circulated *al-ʿAylam al-Zākhir* dedicated to Sultan Murad III (1574–1595). Much less attention has been devoted to his Turkish *Cevāhirü'l-Ġarā'ib*, a compilation of translations from Arābic also dedicated to Murad III, which survives in several manuscripts, of which the most important is the illustrated presentation copy preserved in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. This paper analyses the contents of the *Cevāhirü'l-Ġarā'ib*, which cover both religious texts and more 'mirror for princes' type material, with a view to assessing the place of the work in Ottoman court literature. What texts were chosen for translation? What do they tell us about the message that Cenābī wished to impart to his dedicatee and the cultural and religious atmosphere of court? The place of Cenābī's works in the broader context of the sixteenth-century translation movement in the Ottoman lands is also discussed.

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## Sa'dī's *Gulistān* and Its Three Turkic Translations

Sa'dī Shīrāzī's (d. 1291) *Gulistān*, a prosimetric text with ethical-didactic content completed in 1258, was one of the most popular and widely read Persian works in the Turkic world. Its popularity is well-indicated by the numerous translations and literary replies produced by Ottoman and Central Asian Turkic authors in the early modern period. Based on a few stories included in the first chapter of Sa'dī's text, the proposed paper offers a comparative analysis of three Turkic translations made between the late fourteenth and nineteenth centuries and aims to observe the various strategies the translators applied during their work. The first text is Sayf-i Sarāyī's translation completed in Mamluk Egypt in 1391 in Qipchak Turkic, the second one is the Chaghatay translation of Sibijābī finished a couple of years later, in 1398, and the third one is Āghāhī's (d. 1874) translation produced in Qungrat Khiva in the mid-nineteenth century.

**Benedek Péri** is the director of the Institute of Oriental Studies and the head of the Department of Turkic Studies at Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest. His research interests include various aspects of the history of classical literary traditions (Persian, Chaghatay, Ottoman and Türkī-yi 'Ajāmī) with a special focus on the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the history of Turkic languages and literatures on the Indian subcontinent and the history of drug consumption in Persianate societies. He published extensively on the phenomenon of imitation in classical Turkic/Turkish ghazal poetry and has finished a book on the topic that is awaiting publication. His latest publications

include an edition of the Budapest manuscript of Ḥaydar Ḥvārizmī's *Gulšan al-asrār*, and a critical edition of the Persian divan of Sultan Selim I (r. 1512–1520).

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## When Sweet Dew Fluttered Down... Of a Panegyric on the Buddhist Miracles Written in Persian

In 1407, the fifth Karma-pa (1384–1415) conducted a fourteen-day Mass of Universal Salvation at the Linggu Monastery, by invitation of the Ming Emperor Yongle (r. 1402–1424). This ritual aimed to pacify the spirits of the Emperor's father, Ming Taizu (r. 1368–1398), and his empress. At the same time, it was an Esoteric Buddhist Mandala ritual. During this ceremony, the Karma-pa performed as a manifestation of *Avalokiteshvara Jinasagara* (Ocean of Conquerors) and served as the spiritual teacher of the Yongle Emperor. It continued the tradition of the emperor-lama relationship established in the Yuan dynasty (r. 1271–1368).

A 50-meter-long silk handscroll, known as the 'Karma-pa Scroll,' was commissioned to commemorate this event. The scroll, which includes forty-nine scenes depicting miraculous signs that appeared during the ritual, integrates both Chinese and Tibetan painting styles. In addition to the visual narrative, the multilingual inscriptions are written in five languages: Chinese, Persian, Tibetan, Mongolian, and Tai Tham. The latter four inscriptions were translated from Chinese but creatively adapted by the translators to align Chinese religious terms and literary allusions with the cultural contexts of each language.

This study explores the 'Karma-pa Scroll' with a particular focus on the Persian inscriptions through philological analysis. By comparing the Persian vocabulary in these inscriptions with contemporary Chinese-Persian bilingual glossaries, official bilingual texts, Persian inscriptions on Ming ceramics, and historical documents from the Mongol Empire and Timurid period, the author aims to identify literary and cross-cultural translation strategies in the post-Mongol context. This analysis further sheds light on the cultural atmosphere of the early Ming court, particularly regarding the Mongol political and cultural heritage it retained.

**Yihao Qiu** is currently an associate professor in the Department of History at Fudan University (Shanghai). He is the author of *Studies on The Political History of Yuan Dynasty and Culture Exchanges in Mongol Eurasia* (2019). His main research themes are the history of the Yuan Dynasty and the Persian Chinggisid genealogies, the Mongols in the Mamluk Sultanate, and the history of the early Ming Dynasty, etc. His most recent publications include: "Some Traces of an Unknown Mongolian Translation of the 'Kalila wa Dimna' in the Veritable Records of the Joseon Dynasty", *Journal of the Studies on Central Asia* (2024/1); "Understanding the Career of Mongolian Speakers in the Mamluk Sultanate: A Comparative Perspective", *Acta Asiatica Varsoviensia*: 36 (2023); "Rescuing Legitimate Narrative by Re-imaging Qubilai Qa'an." *The Mongol World*. T. May & M. Hope (Eds.), London: Routledge (2022), and "Mirroring Timurid Central Asia in Maps: Some Remarks on Knowledge of Central Asia in Ming Geographical Documents," *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* (2021/1).

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## The Ismaili Translation Movement and the Fate of the Alamut Library

The Ismaili translation movement, with its nexus at Alamut and an extended network most famously connected with the figure of the eminent Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, was dislodged by the Mongol takeover of 1256 and a significant part of its material achievement was allegedly destroyed. The striking account of putting the famed library to flames is given by no other than the famous Ilkhanid official and historian, al-Juvaynī. The narrative is then repeated in modern historiography to explain why so few works produced by the Nizari Ismaili *da'wa* survived. Yet, even the most detailed textual studies that scrutinise every detail of the narrative surrounding these events do not take manuscript evidence into account. A modest contribution by the present author can be counted among the first attempts to revise this position on which there is a scholarly consensus. I endeavour to show that the Mongol takeover of 1256, while presenting a challenge to the survival of the community and the preservation of its intellectual output, did not entirely dismantle the social and intellectual networks that extended beyond the Alamut valley across eastern and western Iran. Among others, this network, which contributed to a translation movement, was maintained by Khwāja Naṣīr al-Ṭūsī. The present paper builds on my previous research for a paper on bilingual colophons found on copies of *Akhlaq-i Nāṣiri* and *Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* – texts which have a rich parallel manuscript tradition in both Arabic and Persian particularly in the Ilkhanid and Timurid periods – and my ongoing work on the *Arabo-Persian Corpus of Digital Ismā'īlī Texts* (DigIT.1.0).

I am building this bilingual corpus to computationally explore the dynamics of translation and adaptation of the Fāṭimid and other Arabic materials in the Persianate context. Combining manuscript research and digital methods, I shed light on the scattered survival of the Ismaili textual tradition from Egypt to Transoxiana, revising the claim about the destruction of Nizari Ismaili book collections, also paving the ground for distant-reading explorations of this bilingual tradition.

**Aslisho Qurboniev** is a historian of the premodern Islamicate world with a focus on Fāṭimid history and a broader interest in the circulation of texts across Eurasia and Maghrib. He received his PhD in 2019 from the University of Cambridge with a thesis on the textual traditions in Fāṭimid Ifrīqiya. He has published several articles, including one coauthored paper on bilingual colophons on Ilkhanid era manuscripts, and is currently finishing a multi-authored book on the history of Arabic books – the result of postdoctoral work with the KITAB project (AKU, London). He is also interested in digital methods and is currently building a bilingual corpus of Ismaili texts.

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## A Mysterious Translation of a Late Shii Classic: The Patna Translation of Qāzī Nūrullāh Shūshtarī's (d. 1610) *Iḥqāq al-ḥaqq*

Conceived in Arabic at the turn of the seventeenth century in Mughal India, Qāzī Nūrullāh Shūshtarī's (d. 1610) *Iḥqāq al-ḥaqq* is a polemical text that refutes Faḡlallāh Khunjī's (d. 1521) objections to Shiism. The latter, working in Transoxiana under Shaybanid patronage, had written a rebuttal of a work by al-ʿAllāma al-Ḥillī's (d. 1325), the famous Shii theologian credited with persuading Öljeitü Khan (r. 1304–1316) to embrace Shiism. Starting from the late seventeenth century, the *Iḥqāq al-ḥaqq* became the object of a series of independent translations in Iran and, from what it is possible to infer at the moment, India as well. It is precisely one of these translations that my talk will focus on.

According to the cataloguing notes of the Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library in Patna, an anonymous translation of the work in question was copied in the eighteenth century. This is possible, but not irrefutable, given that the colophon only gives the date of completion of the original work itself. Moreover, the manuscript offers little paratextual information, which makes it virtually impossible to assess the history of its production and transmission. In my paper, I will explore how the translation techniques of key passages in the Patna manuscript differ from other translations of the same text for which we do have more paratextual information. I will also compare the translation techniques of the Patna manuscript with those of other translators of Shii sources from roughly the same (alleged) period in South Asia. In so doing, I propose some hypotheses on clues to follow for a possible attribution of the translation and explore the question of whether certain translation patterns are common across translations of Shii texts in early modern South Asia.

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## Translating Power: Central Asian Multilingual Practices and the Mongol Chancery Tradition

**T**he multilingual administrative practices of the Mongol Empire are typically discussed in the context of Sino-Mongol or Perso-Mongol interactions. Nevertheless, during the initial stages of Mongol administrative tradition, the interaction with Central Asian practices, particularly those of the Uyghur chancery, was the most profound and impactful. This paper will elucidate this less discussed exchange through an analysis of the original documents that have been preserved from the Turfan Basin and the Gansu Corridor (which is now part of the Xinjiang and Gansu provinces of the People's Republic of China).

The existence of a considerable number of original Old Uyghur and Middle Mongolian administrative documents allows both traditional and material philological study of the Uyghur-Mongol corpus. Consequently, the initial section of this paper will concentrate on the diplomatic and material characteristics of these documents while the subsequent section will address the interaction between Old Uyghur and Middle Mongolian languages. Specific focus will be given to the borrowings of specialised terminology and mirror translations in both directions. The final section of the paper will extend beyond the Uyghur-Mongol contacts and the domain of administrative texts. However, the genre under discussion, namely multilingual thematic vocabularies, was undoubtedly a crucial instrument for multilingual chanceries in Mongolia and post-Mongol Eurasia. This section will trace the genre's origins and emphasise the significance

of a Central Asian, or more specifically a Silk Road tradition, in navigating the complexities of multilingual environments.

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## Beyond Textual Translation: Transmission of Islamicate Astral Sciences to 13th–15th century China

In 1368, after the Ming founder Hongwu (r. 1368–1398) captured Beijing, the capital of the Mongol Yuan dynasty, the imperial archive – holding hundreds of Arabo-Persian text – fell into his hands. By 1382, the Hongwu Emperor had ordered the translation of selected texts on astral sciences. A group of Muslim astronomers, interpreters, and Chinese scholars completed the translation within five months. Historically, scholars have credited this 1382 translation as the origin of the *Huihui Lifa* (Muslim Mathematical Astronomy), a Chinese *zīj* (astronomical handbook) that drew Chinese astronomers' interest for centuries. However, this paper revisits that assumption. By analysing manuscripts of two *zīj* produced in China and multiple editions of the *Huihui Lifa*, I argue that this work did not emerge from a single translation event. Rather, it was the product of an ongoing process of multilingual oral instruction, note-taking, and textual production that stretched from the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries. This paper sheds new light on the transmission of Islamicate astral knowledge in China, emphasising the collaborative and evolving exchange of intellectual traditions that extended far beyond the translation event.

**Qiao Yang** is a historian of premodern China and the Islamicate world, specialising in the Mongol Empire (1206–1368). Her research intersects social history with the history of science, exploring the social and cultural contexts that shaped the development and exchange of knowledge. Qiao's first book project, *Heavenly Knowledge, World Empire*, examines the interplay between the Mongols' imperial power and astral sciences (astronomy, astrology, calendar making). It demonstrates that the Mongols governed with a sophisticated understanding of the heavens and shaped the development of astral sciences by elevating their social prestige and mobilising astronomers across Eurasia. Her second book project, *Empire of Languages*, investi-

gates how multilingualism connected Mongol Eurasia during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. It explores the Mongols' formal language policies in administration, diplomacy, and education while also examining how everyday individuals engaged in language learning and translingual communication. Before joining Van Leer, Qiao was a research scholar at the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science.

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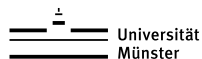


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