

Call for Papers

Translation and Multilingualism in Mongol and Post-Mongol Eurasia

Workshop co-organised between
TRANSLAPT (University of Münster) & NoMansLand (IFI - ÖAW)
4-6 June 2025, University of Münster, Germany
abstract submission deadline: **15 November 2024**

The conquests of Chinggis Khan in the thirteenth century mark 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, which 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 and the use of multiple languages, which became essential tools for governance, diplomacy, trade, and cultural exchange. Additionally, intellectual elites in the empire were multilingual, with scholars, secretaries, and traders using a variety of languages and linguistic registers depending on the social and political context in which they communicated. The need to manage a multilingual empire with varied traditions and knowledge systems led to the development and institutionalization 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. In the Ottoman Empire, multilingualism was vital for administering a diverse population and for maintaining diplomatic relations across Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa. Timurid Central Asia emerged as a vibrant hub of cultural and intellectual exchange, where Persian, Turkish, and Arabic coexisted and were utilised in the production of texts reflecting the region's rich linguistic heritage. Likewise, in Mughal India, the interaction among Persian, Sanskrit, and various regional languages fostered the creation of a sophisticated cultural environment, where translation served as a bridge connecting disparate traditions and promoting a relatively cohesive imperial identity. Throughout these and other regions influenced by the Mongols, including China and Korea, for instance, the legacy of Mongolian-era multilingualism and translation practices persisted, profoundly impacting the cultural and intellectual topography of Eurasia.

This workshop aims to investigate 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. Focusing on the period's extensive and diversified manuscript traditions, we seek to elucidate the mechanisms enabling effective communication and comprehension within a multilingual sphere extending from Eastern Asia to the Middle East. Viewing translation as an embodiment of knowledge transmission, the conference will delve deeper into the subject of translation as a notion, procedure, and outcome, debating who transferred knowledge, when, and in what settings.

Regarding this inquiry, special consideration will be given to the methodology of material philology, where manuscripts serve as conduits conveying data concerning multilingual authors and audiences, ancient reading

habits and translation techniques, and the diffusion of knowledge within distinct socio-cultural frameworks. Factors analysed will encompass both primary textual elements and supplementary aspects, including annotations (ownership stamps, endowments, notes, corrections), and bibliographic attributes (layout, fonts, illuminations, materials). These components collectively provide insight into localised backgrounds and contextualise historical perceptions.

We invite paper proposals addressing, but not limited to, the following themes:

- Translation as a method for reinterpreting the original text
- Actors involved in translation: translators, patrons, copyists, and readers
- Languages as pedagogical tools: translation and multilingualism in educational settings
- Role of translations in establishing genres and canons
- Material aspects of translations: paratextual and codicological elements in manuscripts
- Functional divisions of multilingual text forms

Jointly organised by the research groups TRANSLAPT (University of Münster) and NoMansLand (IFI - ÖAW), the workshop aims to examine the intricate facets of translation practices during the Mongol and post-Mongol periods. Our investigation focuses on identifying what texts were translated, who undertook these translations, and the contexts in which they occurred. Of particular interest are the functions performed by various languages in composing texts and their reciprocal influence within Eurasia's culturally diverse setting. Preference will be granted to presentations centered on manuscripts, which yield significant insights into translation procedures and multilingual dynamics at the time. Submissions emphasizing linguistic, textual, and cultural interchange analyses, alongside discussions of broader implications for comprehending Eurasian history, are encouraged.

Accommodation for **three nights** in Münster will be provided for accepted participants and some financial help will be available to support travel costs for a limited number of participants. **Travel support should be requested when submitting the abstract**, and is especially reserved for graduate students, young, or unaffiliated scholars.

Submission Guidelines

We welcome scholars from diverse fields, including history, linguistics, literature, and cultural studies, to submit abstracts for papers aligned with the workshop's themes. Submissions should present novel research findings. **Abstracts should not exceed 250 words, and a concise bio (maximum 200 words)** stating your current academic affiliation is also required. Please combine both documents into **a single PDF file**, titled with your last name, and send it in English to [both translapt@uni-muenster.de](mailto:translapt@uni-muenster.de) and nomansland@oeaw.ac.at by **15 November 2024**. Notifications regarding acceptance will be dispatched by 15 December 2024.

Organising Committee

Prof. Dr. Philip Bockholt (University of Münster)
Dr. Bruno De Nicola (Austrian Academy of Sciences)