

What Connects Mongol Rulers with the Chinese World:
Imperial Edicts, a Literal Translation Style, and Spoken Chinese

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The impacts of the Mongols on the Eurasian history cannot be underestimated as recent related studies have demonstrated. China proper was important for the Mongol rulers as they obtained a lot of economical and human resources from it, while Mongol rule remained continuous influences over China proper. It can also be said that China proper was transformed by Mongol rule from the top to the bottom.

Given this perspective, we need to consider an issue what connects Mongol rulers with proper China. It seems reasonable to suppose that a transmission of orders and information would be one of the most important functions which link each other. This presentation examines the Mongol Empire's language policy, focusing on the question of the so-called "literal translation style" (*Zhiyiti*)—i.e. a style of Chinese language metaphrased from Mongolian. The emergence of this style was epoch-making in that state power created, on its own initiative, a particular style of translation, and required that officials use it in translating Mongolian official documents, including edicts, into Chinese. The *Zhiyiti* was a type of "contact language," based on Chinese vocabulary and Mongolian syntactic structures.

The starting point of this analysis is the fact that there are some common linguistic elements between the language of official documents written in *Zhiyiti* and that of the *Laoqida* (*Nogeoldae*), one of the oldest Chinese language textbooks originally published during the Mongol period. This presentation proves, firstly, that the *Laoqida* was not metaphrased from Mongolian. Then, it proceeds to analyze why linguistic elements of *Zhiyiti* are found even in the materials which were written without using the *Zhiyiti* style. Although *Zhiyiti* was a linguistic style chiefly meant for the purpose of translation, the documents produced in *Zhiyiti* were read out aloud on various occasions and people listened to the sounds of the *Zhiyiti*. It was through this process that the sounds of *Zhiyiti* came to affect the colloquial or spoken language.

It is noteworthy that state policy contributed, in this way, to the transformation of a language, even if in a limited degree. This is an interesting case, which might stimulate the further development of sociolinguistic history.