

## PRACTICE OF POWER IN ILKHANATE: ANALYSIS OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION AND SOCIAL EXCHANGE

Apipudin<sup>1\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Universitas Indonesia, Indonesia

\*Corresponding author: [apipudinsihab@gmail.com](mailto:apipudinsihab@gmail.com)

### ABSTRACT

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Ilkhanate was a Mongol empire located in Persia. There were cultural changes and different forms of practice in exercising government power. However, despite the significance of understanding the practice of power in the Ilkhanate through the lens of communication theories, there is a research gap in exploring the specific dynamics of intercultural communication and social exchange theory within this context. Therefore, this study aims to fill this research gap by examining the interplay between power and communication in the Ilkhanate, mainly through the principles of intercultural communication and social exchange theory. The methodology employed in this research is a comprehensive literature study. The findings of this article highlight the inseparability of communication and power, emphasizing the role of intercultural communication in facilitating harmonious relations between diverse nations, including considerations of race, religion, and customs. Additionally, the rulers of the Ilkhanate strategically employed communication and adapted their policies to gain support from local communities, such as Persians and Arabs, particularly by catering to the Muslim population. This research contributes to understanding power practices and strategies in the Ilkhanate by elucidating their alignment with intercultural communication and social exchange theories.

### المخلص

الكلمات المفتاحية:  
الخانانات؛  
التواصل بين الثقافات؛  
نظرية التبادل الاجتماعي؛  
الديناميكا السلطوية

إلخانات هي إمبراطورية منغولية تقع في فارس. تمت وجود تغيرات ثقافية وأشكال مختلفة في ممارسة سلطة الحكومة. ومع ذلك، على الرغم من أهمية فهم ممارسة السلطة في إلخانات من خلال نظريات الاتصال، إلا أن هناك فجوة بحثية في استكشاف ديناميات الاتصال الثقافي ونظرية تبادل الاجتماعي في هذا السياق. لذا، تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى سد هذه الفجوة البحثية من خلال فحص التداخل بين السلطة والاتصال في إلخانات، وبخاصة من خلال مبادئ الاتصال الثقافي ونظرية تبادل الاجتماعي. تعتمد منهجية هذا البحث على دراسة شاملة للمراجع. تسلط نتائج هذا المقال الضوء على عدم قابلية الفصل بين الاتصال والسلطة، مشددة على دور الاتصال الثقافي في تيسير العلاقات المتناغمة بين الأمم المتنوعة، بما في ذلك الاعتبارات المتعلقة بالعرق والدين والعادات. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، استخدم حكام إلخانات التواصل بشكل استراتيجي وعدلوا سياساتهم لكسب دعم المجتمعات المحلية، مثل الفرس والعرب، خاصة من خلال تلبية احتياجات السكان المسلمين. يساهم هذا البحث في فهم ممارسات واستراتيجيات السلطة في إلخانات من خلال توضيح توافيقها مع نظريات الاتصال الثقافي ونظرية تبادل الاجتماعي.

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### INTRODUCTION

The Mongols had a rich history and priceless culture for their contribution to world civilization. In 1206, in the Quriltay, the assembly of the tribal chiefs of the Mongols, there was an agreement to appoint Chenghis Khan as the supreme leader (Karim, 2016). Chenghis

Khan was a title for Temujin or Temucin, the son of the leader or Khan of the Mongols, originally named Yesugey Ba'atur (Nasirova, 2020).

Burgan (2009) explained that in 1259, after Möngke's death, Khubilai and Ariq Böke competed for the title of Great Khan (leader of the Mongols). Ariq Böke was supported by Berke (the third Khan of the Golden Horde and descended from Chaghatai and Ögedei). Meanwhile, Hülegü and the Mongol princes stood for Khubilai in China. The princes immediately urged Khubilai to become Great Khan and then voted for him in a quality held at Shangdu in May 1260. Ariq Böke and his supporters disagreed with the election result. One month later, Ariq Böke claimed the title of Great Khan, which triggered a civil war. Khubilai won the fight. In 1264, Ariq Böke was forced to accept his brother's title as Great Khan (Melville, 2016).

The Ilkhanate itself was one of the four minor khanates of the Mongol Empire centered in Persia. The first Ilkhan and founder of the Ilkhanate were Hülegü. His territory stretched from the Oxus River and the Hindu Kush to Anatolia. It is now a significant part of modern Turkey (Burgan, 2009). The first capital of the Ilkhanate was Tabriz (now a city in Iran). Hülegü's descendants later relocated the capital to Sultaniyya (Lane, 2022).

As previously discussed, Hülegü stood with Khubilai. Burgan (2009) explained that Ilkhan means "lower prince," reflecting the idea that Great Khan was still in charge of the region. The word "Il" comes from the Mongolian language, which means "controlled" or "not rebellious." It means that Hülegü accepted Khubilai as the Great Khan and was unwilling to challenge his authorities.

As a leader, Hülegü had a high tolerance for Christians and non-Muslims. He allied with Christians in Syria and Armenia against the combined Muslim Berke and Mamluk armies. Hülegü influenced the war with Berke as the supporter of Khubilai and Berke who supported Ariq Böke. Other factors were affected, like the border dispute over Azerbaijan and that Berke converted to Islam. He did not like Hülegü's leniency towards Christians and others who did not practice Islamic laws (Burgan, 2009).

After Hülegü's death, his son, Abagha, served as Ilkhan. Like his father, he believed in Buddhism. Abagha's reign was full of civil wars against the Mamluks. Abagha died in the failed Syrian invasion. He was later succeeded by his brother, Teguder, in 1282. During his era, Teguder decided to convert to Islam and attempted to turn the Ilkhanate into an Islamic empire. Unfortunately, before he could achieve his goal, he was seized by Arghun, son of Abagha (Burgan, 2009). Like the kings before Teguder, Arghun strongly got prepared to ally with the Christians to destroy the Muslims (Mamluks).

Islam performed progressive development in the Ilkhanate when Ghazan led the kingdom. Ghazan was the son of Arghun and the grandson of Abagha. Since he was young, Ghazan studied Buddhism as his father and grandfather did. Ghazan's relationship with Arghun's successor, Ghaykhatu, was icy. A similar thing also happened to Baydu, his cousin, who had dethroned Ghaykhatu (Karim, 2016). Although initially, Ghazan was Buddhist, he changed his religion to Islam. There are several versions regarding the process of Ghazan's conversion into Islam. One of them said that Ghazan became a Muslim to fight against Baydu. In his heydays, many Mongols began to change their belief to be Muslims. He also changed his Ilkhan title to Sultan (Burgan, 2009).

The history of the Ilkhanate as a vast empire is fascinating to study through communication theory. It shows many communication practices. This paper focuses on communication practices that occur between two different cultures. Examples of intercultural communication are converting the Ilkhan religion to Islam, the rule of the Mongol empire in Persian territory, and the great civil war that divided the Mongols into two camps.

Intercultural communication is not a new thing. It has been an integrated process since long ago as part of human interaction. The history of intercultural communication is as old as humanity (Jones & Quach, 2007). People's migration in search of new lands,

engaging in trade, and ideological and physical conquests, have brought them from different cultural backgrounds to meet and interact with each other (Samovar et al., 2015). Samovar et al. (2015) explained that interaction may be beneficial but can sometimes result in disaster and riots.

Even though it has been integrated into society, intercultural communication is a new topic to discuss in academic disciplines. Experts just started to identify it about 70 years ago. Rogers & Steinfatt (1999) defined Intercultural communication as the exchange of information among individuals with cultural differences. This definition also aligns with Samovar et al. (2015) that intercultural communication occurs when someone from one culture sends a message to be processed by another from a different culture. Although this definition may seem simplistic, intercultural communication requires a thorough understanding of two key elements: communication and culture.

When someone builds communication, regardless of the situation or context, he communicates to persuade, inform, or entertain. In other words, he does it with specific purposes and goals when communicating. Griffin (2005) defined communication as managing messages to create meanings.

Culture itself has many definitions put forward by experts. One of the earliest and most easily understood definitions of culture, and is still used today, was written in 1871 by a British anthropologist, Sir Edward Burnett Tylor. He described culture as “a complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs, and other capabilities and habits acquired by humans as members of society” (Sir Edward, 2012).

### ***Intercultural Communication and Power***

Communication also connects with power. Many experts assume that individual communication is equal, but this is rarely the case (Allen, 2004). Every society has a social hierarchy that privileges some groups over others. The groups that function at the top of the hierarchy influence the communication system of the whole society (Stinchcombe, 2000). Influential people, consciously or not, create and maintain communication systems that reflect, reinforce, and promote their ways of thinking and communicating (Orbe, 1998). Martin & Nakayama (2010) stated that power and the relationship with power influence someone to claim something or other persons under certain conditions. An example is how some cultures can be accepted and promoted in specific environments, while others are only tolerated, or even there are unacceptable cultures. Therefore, power imbalances among different groups or cultures contribute to feelings of being threatened and may lead to conflicts.

### ***Social Exchange Theory***

Social Exchange Theory comes from the researcher's theory, which theorizes that humans naturally tend to maintain relationships that they believe will trigger better rewards than the costs incurred (Blau, 1964). The theory argues that people consciously and unconsciously evaluate each social situation regarding what they have to give or give up, then relate it to the benefits they think they will get. The potential benefit will result in a more significant personal investment in a relationship. This is in line with Kim (2016), who explained that the benefits derived from interaction might be in the form of some resources like goods, services, or the exchange of social values.

Kim (2016) proposed three assumptions in Social Exchange Theory:

1. Self-interest; Roloff (1981) said that the driving force of a relationship is the advancement of the self-interest of both parties.
2. Reciprocity and interdependence; when individuals perceive a relatively balanced degree of reciprocity in a social exchange, they will be more likely to be satisfied. This is in line with Homans (1958). He introduced the idea that individuals feel most comfortable when they earn benefits from an equal relationship to what they put into it.

3. The morality of individual rights and justice; mutual consent exists in starting and undergoing a relationship. Each individual has a set of attributes and rights (Fiske, Kitayama, Markus, & Nisbett, 1998).

This research uses a literature study. Creswell (2009) stated that a literature review is a written summary of articles, journals, books, and other documents that describe theories and information in the past and present' and organizes the literature into topics and required documents.

According to Cooper (2010), a literature review has some objectives, namely to inform the results of other studies that are closely related to the journal being written, connect the writing with the existing literature, fill in gaps in previous research, and provide a framework and a benchmark for comparing with other findings.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

As a sub-kingdom of the Mongol empire, the Ilkhanate certainly has a rich history. The extent of the Ilkhanate territory, the practice of power, to the struggle for power in the Ilkhanate are some aspects to study through the perspective of Communication Science, especially using the theory of Intercultural Communication. An individual carries out communication to create meaning, such as to persuade, inform, or entertain (Griffin, 2005). The Ilkhan in the Ilkhanate communicated with specific purposes. When there was a rebellion to dethrone Gaykhatu as Ilkhan, the rebellion was justified because Gaykhatu had deviated from the way of Chinggis Khan's government. He was accused of living extravagantly and only caring about entertainment to fulfill his desires for women and alcohol (Hope, 2016). Communication through the justification aims to persuade and inform the people that the rebellion had a strong reason.

Culture is a complex whole that includes knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, law, customs, and other capabilities and habits humans acquire as members of society (Sir Edward, 2012, par.1). The Ilkhanate was an empire with a Mongol culture. The Great Khan of the Mongols guided all knowledge, beliefs, arts, and customs. According to Shuter (1977), culture is something that all parties in a community group universally accept. Culture for a country like the Ilkhanate, born from the conquest, was crucial. This is because culture is a driving factor that may cause friction (Burtch, et., al (2014). Next, Alcoff (1988) argued that culture can affect a country due to the concept of "positionality." It is where culture can direct attention in the context where the subject is positioned as a collaborative group and does not focus on individual characteristics (race, culture, religion, and customs). In this way, the subject is embodied, contextualized, historically as a unit, and a single subject together as a unitary state.

Then, national culture is a crucial part of a country, especially a multi-ethnic country like the Ilkhanate. State culture is an idea that focuses on rejecting the ideals of universal citizen rights and insisting that the natural divisions that exist between nations, races, religions, and customs must be respected. This concept views the nation as an organic entity (Dikotter, 1996). Therefore, having a unified identity in a country with heterogeneous citizens is very important.

The discussion after the forms of communication and culture in the Ilkhanate is the process of intercultural communication in the practice of government power. Rogers & Steinfatt (1999) showed that intercultural communication is exchanging information among individuals with cultural differences. Intercultural communication happens when someone from one culture sends a message to be processed by another from a different culture (Samovar et al., 2015).

In the history of the Ilkhanate, intercultural communication occurred in some historical events and facts. With the conquests made by Hülegü and the creation of the Ilkhanate, the Mongols took control of Persia and neighboring lands. They also ruled the Persian government and society previously dominated by Muslims, despite the presence of

Christian and Jewish minorities (Pfeiffer, 2014). Persia was a region where most of the people were Muslims. This caused the Al-Quran, as the holy book of Muslims became the region's general law (Kolbas, 2013). Under Hülegü, Mongol law had a better position. The people under Hulegu's leadership carried out two rules simultaneously, i.e., Islamic and Mongolian laws (Aigle, 2008). Hatef-Naiemi (2022) explained that the coming of Ilkhanate into Persia showed the interaction of two different cultures, Mongol and Persian. This interaction also shows how power can have specific effects, as seen from how Hülegü then determined that Mongol law was more critical in Persia than the Islamic one (Al-Quran).

There was an evident influence of Intercultural Communication on the power in the conflict between Islam and Buddhism in the Ilkhanate. According to Komaroff and Carboni (2002), the Mongols tolerated all religions, but as discussed earlier, this situation would weaken the role of Islam in the government. This continued until there was Ilkhan converted to Islam. Even so, some Mongol leaders wanted to return to customary laws. According to Morgan (1986), in the early 14<sup>th</sup> century, a Mongol general told other Mongols that it was a disgraceful and dishonorable act to leave Great Jasaq Chinggis Khan for Al-Qur'an. This problem triggered a conflict and greatly influenced the history of the development of the Ilkhanate.

The first Ilkhan to convert to a Muslim was Teguder. He was the brother of Abagha and was the third Ilkhan of the Ilkhanate. During his reign, he tried to ally with the Muslims in Egypt. Unfortunately, before he could turn the Ilkhanate into an Islamic empire, he was conquered by Arghun, the son of Abagha (Burgan, 2009). Paul D. Buell (2003), in "Historical Dictionary of the Mongol World Empire," explained that Arghun's reign began with a bloodbath when he killed Teguder and his supporting officials.

Gasimov and Azimli (2018) deeply explained the development of Islamic culture. It was related to the development of the Islamic religion in the Ilkhanate during the reign of Ghazan Khan. Ghazan was born on December 4, 1271 AD. He was the son of Arghun and the grandson of Abagha. Since he was young, he studied Buddhism as his father and grandfather practiced. Abagha entrusted Ghazan to be taught the values of Buddhism by the chief monks (Drobyshev, 2006). However, around 1295 AD, Ghazan declared himself a Muslim. Several versions explain the process of Ghazan converting his belief into Islam. Landa (2016) stated that it was due to the services of the Commander-in-Chief, Nawrüz, who helped him against his cousin, Baydu. Next, Karim (2016) explained that Ghazan promised that if he won the battle against Baydu, he would accept Prophet Muhammad's religion. He fulfilled his promise on June 19, 1295, accompanied by 100,000 Mongols. Besides being associated with intercultural communication, this event also relates to the social exchange theory. In short, social exchange theory explains how someone establishes relationships with others by considering what benefits he gets from this relationship. The benefits may be in goods, services, or the exchange of social values (Kim, 2016). Ghazan and Commander General Nawroz established a relationship to obtain certain benefits from this event.

Social Exchange Theory has three assumptions; self-interest, reciprocity, interdependence, and morality of individual rights and justice (Kim, 2016). May (2020) explained that this alliance would occur with the mutual consent of both parties. From the alliance between Ghazan and Nawrüz, Ghazan was interested in defeating Baydu, and Nawrüz intended to spread Islamic teachings. The reciprocity of this alliance can be seen in Ghazan's success in overthrowing Baydu from his throne and Ghazan's conversion to Islam.

During the reign of the Muslim Ghazan, the Mongol tradition had been getting weaker in the Ilkhanate. The reign of Ghazan performed the influence of power in intercultural communication. Burgan (2009) explained that when Ghazan was a king, many Mongols converted to Islam. Furthermore, Prazniak (2014) showed that Ghazan started his authority with a wave of persecution against Christians and Buddhists, although he later stopped the forced conversion. Some Mongols also gave up their nomadic lifestyle and started marrying the locals, especially the Turks. McPherson (1984) stated that an acculturation process

occurred between the Mongol Culture and the indigenous cultures of Turkey and Persia. This process continued for decades.

Shanks and Al-Kalai (1984) explained the practice of Ghazan's power and showed how he used his authority as a ruler to spread Islamic culture. Besides forcing his people to convert to Islam, he used his authority for several other policies. Fitzherbert (2006) found that Ghazan dropped the title of Ilkhan and took the title of Muslim Sultan. He also removed the name Great Khan from his coins. The Ilkhans never again considered themselves part of the larger Mongol Empire. In the Islamic world, rulers and other wealthy people sometimes make *waqf*, which means setting aside income from land or business enterprises to maintain mosques and support charities (Kenjaboyeva, 2020). Ghazan helped create new land for *waqf* and spent the money to help the elderly and the sick (Kozlowski, 1985). Ghazan's efforts were an early attempt to break the Ilkhanate's ties to the Mongol Empire to create a new identity for the Ilkhanate.

The changes made by Ghazan are in line with social exchange theory. Some sources explain that the changes were designed to win local support between the Persians and Arabs, and the Ilkhanate continued good military and diplomatic relations with the Great Khan (Burgan, 2001). 2009). If this was true, Ghazan wanted local support from Persians and Arabs. Therefore, he then issued policies that pleased the Muslim Persians and Arabs.

## CONCLUSIONS

In the practice of power carried out by the rulers in the Ilkhanate, communication has become one of the essential things. Intercultural communication is unavoidable due to the Mongols (Ilkhan) in Persia, where these two nations have different cultures. Intercultural conflicts, especially between Islam and Buddhism, in the practice of the power of the Ilkhan, are also a big historical factor in the Ilkhanate, a form of communication influenced by power. The power held by the Ilkhan affected the communication objectives of the Ilkhan. For example, Ghazan issued policies that forced his people to follow Islamic culture. Each actor who plays a role in the practice of power also has his interests, so the interaction fits with social exchange theory.

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