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A Source for the Cosmopolitan Medicine of the Mongol Era: Huihui yaofang

The Mongol Era in China and, to some extent, in the rest of the states of the then Mongol world order, was characterized by remarkable mixture of medical traditions and a free exchange of medical ideas of every sort. In China this meant the practice of Arabic and Tibetan medicine, as well as Chinese and Mongolian, side-by-side, to suit different clienteles, primarily but not exclusively the various components of the Mongolian elite. In Iran the mixture involved most notably a significant importation of Chinese medicine but also, Mongolian medicine and, it is likely, Tibetan traditions, as in China, although this aspect of the complex medical traditions of Mongol Iran remains unevaluated. In the present paper, I will explore the medicine of our most important source for the mixed, cosmopolitan medicine of the time, the Chinese- and Persian-language Huihui yaofang, "Muslim Medicinal Recipes," in which a base of Arabic medicine has been adapted to Chinese and Tibetan traditions to produce a system ancestral to the mature Mongolian medicine of the period of Lamaistic influence, a medicine which is still practiced in Mongolia and currently seeing a renaissance of renewed interest.