

## **Shifting Boundaries of Empire and Identity in Song-Yuan China and Beyond**

Abstract of the panel presented at the AAS Annual Meeting (Philadelphia, 27-30 March, 2014)

Panel organizer: Francesca Fiaschetti

Chair and discussant: Naomi Standen

This panel analyses the relation between borders and processes of identity-building in the context of Medieval Eurasia (1100–1400). The Song-Yuan transition not only represented a challenge to the ideological foundations of Chinese identity, but the multiethnic nature of the Yuan empire also influenced the processes of identity formation of several territorial and ethnic realities in East and Southeast Asia. In this context, borders were not only a matter of geographical representation, but also a construction of new boundaries between the political identity they represented and the “other.” Shao-yun Yang traces the pre-Yuan beginnings of this process by analyzing how in Southern Song representations of the Chinese-barbarian dichotomy, an inclination toward moral universalism challenged traditional emphases on geopolitical and ethnic boundaries. Francesca Fiaschetti takes the discussion into the Yuan period by analyzing the representation of the western and southwestern borderlands in terms of ethnoscapes and matters of practical administration.

Geoffrey Humble more closely analyses issues of identity formation, discussing the representation of Mongol identity in the *Yuanshi* as a social reality transcending the borders of the Yuan empire. Oded Abt moves from history to historical memory by looking at the use of the Song-Yuan period as a re-imagined beginning for the construction of a modern Chinese Muslim identity with distinct variations in China, Taiwan and the Philippines. Comparing different geographical areas and ethnic groups, the panel explores the dynamic mixture of history, ethnicity, and ideology underlying the processes of identity formation within and beyond the borders of the Yuan empire.