

Objectification of Identities and the Emergence of Eurasian Rulership in China, Russia and the Middle East, 1250-1500

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Mongol rulerships established across the Muslim world built upon long-standing institutions of identity ascription, adding additional practices from Central Asia. The result was an unprecedented objectification of civil and military identities as a fundamental process of government and as an element of rulership. The dynamics of the interaction between civil identity ascription and Mongol rulership may be advantageously observed in the context of conquest, and the mutation of civil identity criteria in later decades may be equally advantageously observed in the context of transition from conquest to occupation. Both phases contributed to the revision of religious authority in legitimating the rulership, and form part of the foundation of the self-legitimizing and self-historicizing rulerships across Eurasia that mark the transition from the medieval to the early modern world.

This style of "simultaneous" rulership was built of upon a schema elevating the ruler above particulars of identity --whether cultural or religious-- and at the same time imbuing the ruler with the unique ability to personify traditions individually and occupy their moral centers. To complete these imperial representations, audiences or constituencies of the rulership were historicized and ascribed to living communities, subsequently emblemized by spectacle and monuments; by imperial publishing of histories and geographies placing identities in space and time; by language primers, chrestomathies and lexicons disciplining the language through with the rulership and the constituencies addressed each other. These historicized, codified and ritualized constituencies were not people, and the degree to which communities and individuals found them credible is a problem for the early modern world. This paper will be limited to the relationships of identify objectification and conquest rulership through the Muslim world, with comparison to China and Russia.