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Migrating Wealth Through Marriage in the Mongol Empire

Marriage practices in the Mongol empire implied that women relocated into the household of their husbands. When these women were considered as principal wives, they received their own ordo (camp) and revenues in the form of cattle and people at their disposal. As the Mongol empire grew and expanded, the ordos of Mongol women became larger in size and richer in wealth to the point that became fundamental economic, military and political institutions in the always unstable political life of the empire. In some cases, women's ordos became crucial in tipping the scales for a candidate to the throne. This paper focuses its attention on specific periods of Mongol history, times when the appropriation of women's wealth served a political agenda for male rulers. I will discuss how in particular moments in the History of the Mongol empire, the wealthy camps of Mongol women were specifically targeted and appropriated by male relatives, provoking not only a migration of women from one man to another by way of marriage but also a migration of wealth from women to men's hands.