

Evil Deeds of Luckless Tax Farmers in Mongol Middle East

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Abstract: When the Mongols initially introduced tax farming to the former territory of the Jurchen *Jin* Empire that fell to their rule in the 1230s, this decision was not warmly welcomed. Tax farmers never reached higher levels of political and economic prosperity in eastern Asia in Mongol times unlike their counterparts in the Il-khanate. Tax farming was widely used in the Middle East under the Chinggisid Il-Khans until the collapse of their empire in the fourteenth century. However, the Il-khanid vizier Rashid al-Din was very critical of efficiency and morale of tax farmers as did another Mongol courtier Yeh-lü Chu-tsai. What were root causes of failures of tax farming in the Mongol Empire? This study attempts to address this issue by applying economic behaviour theories such as agent problem and information asymmetry in the context of the Il-khanate.

Keywords: Mongol Empire; tax farming; principal–agent problem; Il-khanate

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