

Empires within the Empire: Governance and Dynastic Space in Eastern Eurasia under Mongol Rule

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The period of Mongol rule in China is traditionally understood as part of two different historical narratives: as an example of Han-non-Han interaction in the framework of Chinese history, or as a part of Mongol rule in the context of Mongol Eurasia. Recently however, more and more studies have shown the importance of challenging further the chronological and spatial conventions that traditional sources - and especially dynastic histories - offer. The idea of meso-regions is particularly fitting for the task, as it allows to stress interregional dynamics, offering a valid alternative to traditional center-periphery based narratives. In this paper, the Yuan empire is divided into meso-regions in order to show how Mongol policies fostered the delocalization of power at its borders. Because of the intense interactions with neighbouring polities, frontier regions increased in autonomy, leading to a shift in the political core of the empire, or better to the creation of various cores. Ethnicity and genealogical connections, as well as administrative structures - much more than geopolitical divisions - are the key to understand such dynamics.

In term of chronology, a meso-regional approach brings about the question of the meaning of Mongol rule beyond the limits of the Yuan period. By looking at this issue, the paper will show how the idea of dynastic succession was negotiated and adapted to serve processes of identity-building in the course of subsequent periods of East Asian history.