

## **Voices from the Frontier: Yuan Diplomacy Between Ritual and Practice**

Francesca Fiaschetti (The Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

Mongol diplomacy, after the period of the United Empire, was characterized by a mixture of traditional Inner Asian elements with the rhetorical devices of the neighbouring population, submitted or to submit. Yuan diplomacy followed this pattern of adaptation, as Confucianism provided an ideal platform for the synchresis of forms and contents. As such, the fundamental role of diplomacy was the ritual promulgation of the imperial ideology through the apt performance of the diplomatic protocol and the correct understanding of ritual symbologies. One aim of this paper is to analyse this aspect of diplomacy, and in particular the places, words and gestures on which such rituality was constructed.

On the other hand, Yuan diplomacy served -as complementary to war- to deal with the distant corners of the universal empire. The communication between centre and periphery involved many layers, structures and persons. From the Central Secretariat, to local offices and local officers, to envoys and generals, several individuals were granted great autonomy and found, in the practice of diplomatic communications, the occasion to foster their own interest, ideology, and to shape their own identities as part of the Yuan empire.

Looking at the documents of Yuan exchanges with East and Southeast Asia, this paper analyses the diverse approaches to ritual and practical aspects of the diplomatic encounter. From individual voices to institutional biases, from tradition to innovation, this study addresses several themes to reflect on the very own function of diplomacy under Mongol rule, as a means of individual and collective legitimation, as the occasion for the construction of identities, and of a universalistic ideology to include them all.