

## **Judging by Another's Law: the Transfer of Legal Principles Under the Mongol Empire**

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This talk will examine cultural contact and the transfer of legal principles and practices in the Mongol empire. It will show how in the process of cultural transfer, both Mongol rulers and their subjects exercised agency in fostering or blocking particular influences. The talk will examine firstly the agency of the rulers and the elite. Contrary to what is sometimes assumed, Mongol khans did not necessarily promote Mongol laws, instead often recognizing local legal specialists or including them in deliberations on legal practices. As rulers interested in good relations with local legal specialists, they selected carefully which suggestions of their officials' suggestions to accept. Secondly, the Mongols' subjects also played a great role in influencing legal developments: Chinese officials who, believing the Mongol khans to be the holders of the Mandate of Heaven asked for their involvement in law contributed to a vastly different outcome from Persia where *qadis* were more restrained in their dealings with the Mongol khans. Finally, both Mongol rulers and their subjects were involved in shaping the concept of the "Great Yasa," which came to represent Mongol principles in Central Asia for centuries to come. This talk is based not only on legal sources but also on non-legal sources, the use of which permits a deeper understanding and wider basis for comparison.