

Centre, Periphery, Politics and Authority: Seeking Non-Chinggisid Court Networks in the Early Empire

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The succession of Möngke to the imperial Mongol throne in 1251 often appears inevitable, resulting from decline under Töregene Khatun and Güyük Qa'an, facilitated by Ögödeid enmity with Batu, and underscored by an abortive Ögödeid and Chaghadaid coup attempt after Möngke's elevation. Can this major upheaval in the imperial centre have been purely a family matter, however? Möngke's mother Sorqaghtani Beki receives credit for setting a high moral example and mobilizing Chinggisid support behind him, but could this assure the loyalty of the *keshig*, the multi-ethnic guard group drawn from conquered and submitted territories that dominated early imperial administration? Drawing on the uniquely comprehensive resources of the ERC Mobility Project database, and combining this with case studies from tomb inscriptions this paper will interrogate the evidence we have for the existence of Toluid and other networks around the Chinggisid court before and after Möngke's succession. Examining both content and medium of textual linkages in biographical and historical accounts will allow us to gauge the recording, and perhaps the retrojection, of associations and lineage, and thus the situational and shifting relationship between cultural and political values and norms across first- and second-generation ruling elites, their families, and the work's compilers. This will speak to our understanding of both the inner workings of the court, the mobility of individuals and ideas, and the historiographer's trade in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.