

Toluid Appanages as Mesoscale Agency in Cross-Cultural Exchange

Yoichi ISAHAYA (The Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

In this paper, the “appanages” granted to Chinggisid princely lines will come under scrutiny as “mesospheres,” in other words, intermediaries linking the broad conquest regions as an “empire.” From the very beginning, the Mongol empire was considered to be the common property of the whole Chinggisid family, whose members shared the benefits of empire in the form of “appanages”—containing lands and peoples. Therefore, the underlying structure of the Mongol empire took shape through a series of major territorial dispensations. Among the broad connotations of “appanages,” I focus on one of the aspects, which are the territories allocated to the four princely lines—that is, of Jöchi, Chaghadaid, Ögödei and Tolui—after each wave of conquests. While the appanages formed the main landmass of each khanate, some appanages were installed within the territories of the other three khanates, such as Bukhara—a Toluid appanage within the Chaghadaid khanate. I emphasize that these detached appanages encouraged the unity of “the empire,” by activating the flow of various peoples, commodities, and knowledges across the whole imperial realm.

I deal with the mesospheres specifically from the standpoint of cross-cultural exchange between Iran and China—two core sedentary spheres of the Mongol empire. My working hypothesis is that the time when the appanages ended their role as the intermediaries of cross-cultural exchange would have overlapped with a grand transition of the Mongol empire, which took place around the 1270’s. In this transitional period, the detached appanages had already lost their function as intermediaries for maintaining loose cohesion as a result of inner strife. Instead, the two Toluid dynasties—the Ilkhanid and the Yuan—sought more direct linkages, which at the same time resulted in separating themselves from the other khanates of the Jöchi and Chaghadaid lines. I term these phenomena the formation of “the Toluid empire” consisting only of the Yuan and Ilkhanid dynasties.