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Empire on the Move: A Study of the Mongol Imperial Court (the Ordo)

The Mongol imperial families, unlike most sedentary royal houses, maintained a peculiar institution of tent palaces called *ordo*. The Mongol *ordo* (pl. *ordos*) was a huge conglomerate of tents formed around the palatial tents of emperors or princes who performed seasonal migration every year. A Franciscan friar who witnessed the migration of Batu's *ordo* wrote that it was almost like a huge city on the move. Chinggis Khan maintained the 'Four Great Ordos' and some of his successors seem to have followed the pattern, but we do not have yet a detailed study on this peculiar institution. This paper aims, first of all, at examining and clarifying the composition of *ordo* among the Mongol rulers in the east and the west. And it will also try to enquire into the administration of *ordo*, the peculiarity of the *ordo* politics, and other aspects related with the *ordo* institution.