

The Idea of *Tou Bai* (投拜) and Diplomatic Dilemma: Envoys of the Mongol Empire in the 1340s

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The Mongol empire during the 1340s was in a transition period from Ögödei, Güyük, to Möngke. This paper will focus mainly on several cases of envoys' activities of the Mongol empire with the Pope and with the Southern Song dynasty. Through these cases, this paper will discuss the characters of Mongol diplomacy during the early stage of the Mongol conquest. The Mongol empire and its neighbors were faced with a diplomatic dilemma in terms of envoys' activities in this period. Both the mission of Ascelin sent by the Pope to the Mongols and the mission of Yue Lv Ma Si (月吕麻思) sent by the Mongols to Southern Song experienced great difficulties, and their diplomatic efforts both ended in failure. This paper will try to explain the reason as follows. Firstly, the idea of *Tou Bai* (投拜, surrender), a typical diplomatic concept in the early stage of the Mongol empire, caused communicational obstacle and indirectly led to a sort of diplomacy in secret, especially in the case of Southern Song. Additionally, the diplomatic policy of the Mongol empire in this period was discontinuous due to the change of power structure.

This paper will contain three parts. The first part is about the idea of *Tou bai* in the early stage of Mongol conquest and its influence on the mission of Ascelin and Yue Lv Ma Si. The second part is a detailed discussion of the relationship between the failure of Yue Lv Ma Si mission with the diplomacy in secret of Southern Song. The last part will combine the record of the mission of Ascelin and other historical sources to analyze the change of diplomatic situation following the struggle of different political powers in the western frontier of the Mongol empire.