

From Khanate to Empire: Establishing a Ritual System for Guests from the Later Jin to Early Qing Period

Yu Shu-Chun

Department of History, Zhejiang University

Abstract

This study begins with the ritual system for guests in the Later Jin dynasty (1616-1636) as a way to explore how the Later Jin combined tribal customs with Ming court statutes to form a new ceremonial system. Further discussion also involves political changes and the ritual ceremonies for guests during the Later Jin along with their political and cultural significance. Early after the establishment of the Later Jin, Nurhaci was preoccupied with battles and ritual systems were very much a continuation of previous Nurchen conventions, displaying a facet different from Confucian culture. In the Tiancong reign (1627-1636), Huang Taiji focused on the function of ritual system and used the titles, ceremonial actions, and seating arrangements in texts to differentiate status and affirm the peerage relationship between the Later Jin khan ruler and the various noble ranks. At the same time, he expressed the legitimacy of Later Jin political authority and confirmed the roles and order among it and Ming China, Mongolia, and Korea. To realize the transition of the ritual system from “khanate” to “empire,” Huang Taiji was named emperor and the regime renamed as the Qing. By incorporating Ming court statutes and combining them with tribal customs from the past, a new ritual system and order for guests was created.

Keywords: ceremonial kneeling bow, ceremonial clasping upon meeting, right palace system, left palace system, order throughout the land

(Translated by Donald Brix)