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Introduction

Emperors fascinate historians. Emperors were often the face of the polity, the "visual manifestation of sovereignty," an emblem of the age.[1] Depending on time and place, emperors exercised sweeping political powers and possessed a unique sacral status. In China, they were known grandly as Heaven's Son, men who ruled by Heaven's Mandate and mediated between the sacred and profane. Possessing the full range of human attributes and foibles, they can seem both awesomely distant and intimately familiar.

This book analyzes the exercise of imperial rulership during the first six decades of the fifteenth century, when the Ming dynasty (1368–1644) governed China. Like emperors of other dynasties, Ming rulers regularly highlighted their status as patron and sovereign to a wide variety of populations, both at home and abroad, but my particular focus is early Ming emperors' relations with what contemporaries sometimes called "men from afar"; that is, leaders who usually hailed from beyond dynastic and cultural borders. In both celebrating mastery and cultivating allies, the emperor played the role of lord of lords. I examine one subset of lords or men from afar, Mongol nobles, who were heirs to the military and political legacy of Genghis Khan – here spelled Chinggis Khan (1163–1227). As explained below, to the early Ming court, Mongol nobles were the single most important category of men from afar; they were rivals, allies, and subjects. Relations with Mongol nobles formed a key element of early Ming emperors' identity, style of rule, and ability to secure support and allegiance in east Eurasia.

Emperors' identity and style of rule developed in large part through interaction with other individuals and groups. Identity here is used in two senses. First is the emperor's perception of himself, and second is his fabricated persona intended for broader circulation.[2] The two were intertwined.[3] In the case of

[1] Hilsdale, *Byzantine Art and Diplomacy*, p. 4. Cited in Fowler and Hekster, "Imagining Kings," p. 10.
[2] Geevers and Marini ("Introduction," p. 1) observe, "each aristocratic dynasty developed its own sense of self, through social, political, and religious choices, or through their conception of the family's history and purpose." See also Burke, *Fabrication*.
[3] Silver, *Marketing Maximilian*.

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China, the relationship between emperors and their civil officials, particularly court ministers, has long been a central feature of political and intellectual history. Court ministers, lesser bureaucrats, and the larger body of classically educated elite men from whom officials were drawn wrote most records that survive today. As a consequence, emperors' relations with such men loom large in historical sources. In fact, most of what we know about emperors and imperial rulership comes from such materials, which were shaped by the particular perspectives and concerns of these scholar-officials or literati.[4]

To function, however, dynastic courts needed other groups, including imperial women, palace eunuchs, religious specialists, doctors, painters, cooks, and more.[5] In China, members of such groups did not write much. As a result, their interactions with the emperor are opaque, usually filtered through the writings of literate men who often repeated stereotypes. Imperial women are described as wise, gentle, and frugal, or scheming, shrewish, and profligate. Eunuchs are portrayed as devoted, industrious, and far-sighted, or, more commonly, devious, vain, and vindictive. Recovering the substance and variety of emperors' interactions with such groups is difficult but yields a subtler, more fully human, understanding of rulership.[6]

Another category of people with whom emperors interacted is "men from afar," especially foreign leaders or lords. Such relations were important. Polities and their rulers in what we now call China were deeply embedded in the wider world of east Eurasia from Neolithic times – in fact before there was such a thing as China. Marriage, gifts, war, military alliances, state-controlled trade, diplomatic missions, personnel recruitment, espionage, hostage exchanges, banquets, and personal letters were some of the ways Chinese emperors (and rulers before there were emperors) interacted with contemporary rulers (and their envoys) great and small.

Men from afar figured prominently in the court life of dynasties across the globe.[7] In many traditions around the world, displays of control over distant people suggest superior ability, singular charisma, and unique qualifications as ruler.[8] Distinguished foreign guests added prestige and élan to a sovereign's court. They conferred legitimacy and demonstrated power. Particularly welcome were fellow nobles and aristocrats, whose participation in banquets,

[4] Brandauer ("Introduction") notes literatis' abiding interest in rulers' political, moral, and cultural legitimacy.
[5] Duindam, *Dynasties*, pp. 89–127; Walthall, "Introducing Palace Women"; Cass, "Female Healers"; Soulliere, "Imperial Marriages"; "Palace Women"; McMahon, *Celestial Women*, pp. 75–157; Chen Yunü, *Mingdai*; Tsai, *Eunuchs*; Jang, "The Eunuch Agency."
[6] Rawski, *Last Emperors*; McMahon, *Celestial Women*; *Women Shall Not Rule*; Kutcher, *Eunuch and Emperor*.
[7] For gift-bearing people flocking to the Timurid court, see Bang, "Lord of All the World," p. 175.
[8] Helms, *Ulysses' Sail*; Allen, "Le roi imaginaire," p. 44–45, 52; Barjamovic, "Propaganda and Practice," pp. 46–50.

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receptions, military reviews, and other court spectacles was often recorded in detail. The prominence of men from afar is seen even in countries with relatively circumscribed foreign relations, such as Tokugawa Japan in the seventeenth century. Both narrative descriptions and pictorial representations of envoy missions from the neighboring Chosŏn court from what we now think of as Korea paraded through Kyoto's streets legitimated the new military authorities at home.[9] Vanquished foes presented at court dramatically demonstrated the ruling house's ability to bring enemies to heel, another validation of the sovereign's qualifications to hold the throne. A triumph or processional entry ceremony at the court of the Holy Roman emperor, Maximilian (1459–1519), featured "prisoners from every land" bowing "to his Imperial will."[10] Foreign captives' fates were entirely in the ruler's hands. This display of the sovereign's power was one reason why the presentation of captives to the throne figured so prominently in court spectacles around the world.

For most of Chinese history, "men from afar" could be found both outside and inside the imperial polity.[11] They could be elite members of foreign polities, leading figures from migrant communities that lived and served within the imperial polity, or both. Their foreign origins, whether recent or distant, distinguished them from the emperor and the majority population. Distance – whether physical, cultural, or ritual – carried a charge. Both as foreign leaders and as imperial subjects, men from afar were an important element of imperial courts, where they served as political, military, and cultural advisers. They sometimes figured in marriage alliances that crossed dynastic, linguistic, and cultural borders. They occasionally rose to the apex of power.

To understand interactions between Chinese and foreign leaders, it is common to turn to categories of political science and a basic unit of analysis is the dynasty, which is often treated as analogous to the nation-state.[12] Here, however, by dynasty I mean the ruling house, most especially its head, the emperor, rather than China as a country or a civilization. Although foreign relations – that is, war, trade, diplomacy, and cultural interactions – are important, my primary concern in this book is rulership: how contemporaries understood and represented the ruler's attributes as revealed in his interactions with men from afar.

Rulers of the Early Ming Dynasty

Let us turn to the historical specifics of the early Ming dynasty. A former tenant farmer, mendicant monk, rebel soldier, and ambitious warlord, Zhu Yuanzhang

[9] Toby, *State and Diplomacy*, pp. 64–76, 98–99. [10] Silver, *Marketing Maximilian*, p. 95.
[11] For such communities' place within the Tang polity, see Pan, "Early Chinese Settlement Policies"; "Integration."
[12] Duindam (*Dynasties*, pp. 1–7, 14–20) discusses the historical meaning and significance of the concept of dynasty.

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(1328–98, r. 1368–98), founded his dynasty in 1368 after decades of civil war during the waning years of Mongol rule in China. He spent much of his formidable energy on creating standards of rulership that would keep his dynasty healthy and securely in his descendants' hands. For centuries, scholars have closely studied Zhu Yuanzhang's career and his policies to understand the man, his age, and his legacy for a dynasty that lasted until the mid-seventeenth century.[13]

This book focuses on a less well-researched set of Ming rulers, the first six emperors who followed him. Historians generally conclude that fifteenth-century emperors fell far short of Zhu Yuanzhang. With the possible exception of Zhu Di (Zhu Yuanzhang's son and third Ming emperor – more on him later), later rulers lacked the founder's energy, drive, and ambition.[14] They were, simply put, lesser men. Such a judgment is harsh, and partially true, but largely irrelevant to the importance of early Ming rulership and the throne's ties to men from afar.

In the early fifteenth century, Ming emperors ruled over between one-fifth and one-quarter of the globe's population (say, 85 million of 400 million), most of the world's largest urban centers, the biggest standing army on the planet, and the day's most affluent economy.[15] Their court was the greatest center of political patronage in east Eurasia, likely the world. By virtue of their standing as the rulers of such a powerful polity, Ming emperors of the fifteenth century mattered. The Ming dynastic house did not rule all of east Eurasia, but it exercised influence over scores of lesser leaders across a vast territory from today's eastern Xinjiang to Korea, from the Mongolian steppe to Vietnam and beyond in Southeast Asia. In other words, Ming rulership is part of global history. This is true both in the sense that understanding Ming rulership is important for understanding global history and, conversely, in that Ming rulership must be understood in a global context. Discussions of rulership in the early modern world must include Ming emperors.

As noted above, historians often view Ming rulership through the prism of educated Chinese degree holders and officials, whose writing focuses on their interactions with the emperor. Their expectations of how an ideal sovereign should behave were grounded in textual depictions of exemplars of the distant and recent past that they had internalized during studies for the grueling written examinations they took to enter government service. Their accounts of emperors' interactions with foreign leaders and immigrant communities focus tightly

[13] For points of entry, see Chen Wutong, *Hongwu*, Langlois, "Hung-wu"; Mote, *Poet*; *Imperial China*, pp. 532–82; Wu Han, *Zhu Yuanzhang*.
[14] Of the six, Zhu Di is by far the best-researched. See Chao Zhongchen, *Ming Chengzu*, Mao Peiqi, *Yongle*; Tsai, *Perpetual Happiness*; Shang Chuan, *Yongle*; Zhu Hong, *Ming Chengzu*.
[15] Heijdra, "The Socio-economic Development of Rural China," pp. 428–33; Scott, *Against the Grain*, p. 6.

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on the sovereign and his dynasty precisely to highlight certain qualities of rulership. During much of the first half of the fifteenth century, paeans lauded emperors' confident magnanimity and martial prowess that induced respect and obedience among powerful men who might otherwise challenge the Ming dynasty. These accounts reflect how one dynastic constituency, men who had risen to power on the basis of their mastery of the classical canon, represented things. What they omitted or downplayed – the motivations and perspective of men from afar, the contingent nature of emperors' relations with distant lords and his new subjects, the potential threat to ministers' influence and power that the emperor's new allies represented – must be teased out from historical context.

Relations with foreign leaders formed an integral dimension of emperors' identity during the early Ming dynasty. Such an observation may seem self-evident. After all, the Ming court regularly interacted with scores of polities, and interactions between polities were conducted as relations among dynasties or ruling houses. Although today we are accustomed to think in terms of interactions among nation-states or supranational entities like the United Nations or the European Union, for much of human history, relations among individual lords were far more consequential.[16] As head of the most powerful ruling house in east Eurasia, perhaps the world, it might seem inevitable that interaction with other lords would figure prominently in the Ming rulership. Yet this is not a common view. Instead our perception of the Ming ruling house and Ming history more generally is shaped by three powerful contrasts.

First, despite decades of innovative scholarship that convincingly demonstrates that China in general and the Ming dynasty in particular were deeply tied to east Eurasia, stereotypes about isolation persist. Often China's isolation is an explicit or implicit foil to the West's increasing global engagement. In the case of the Ming period, the contrast between an inward-looking China and a boldly expansive West in its "Age of Discovery" seems beyond question.[17] Such an understanding leaves little room for an emperor cultivating allies abroad, battling foreign rivals, gathering intelligence about distant polities, or worrying about safe passage for merchants and envoys far from home.

Second, even for those well aware of China's links to the outside world during the Ming period, attention usually gravitates toward economic, cultural, technological, and demographic connections. These developments were often distant from the Ming ruling house and the emperor's person. In fact, things like global silver flows, overseas trade, diffusion of military technology, and the Chinese diaspora to Southeast Asia often occurred in defiance of dynastic

[16] Biedermann, Gerritsen, Riello ("Introduction," p. 25) write, "Personal relations between sovereigns served to express power relations on a larger, multisocietal scale."
[17] Clunas (*Empire of Great Brightness*, p. 8) highlights the importance of Ming-period China as the ultimate foil in the formation of early modern Europe's identity.

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law. Viewed in this light, the emperor's absence is integral to our most dominant historical narrative of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. That storyline contrasts a rambunctiously vibrant Chinese society advancing toward modernity, on the one hand, against a moribund, backward-looking state and dynasty, on the other.[18] Such a perspective leaves us ill-prepared for a time when rulers led massive hosts into the steppe, occupied foreign lands, and triggered political crisis and intellectual ferment through personal risk taking and misjudgment – all facets of early Ming rulers' role as lord of lords.

Third, for most specialists of late imperial or early modern Chinese history – that is, the period from 1400 to 1800 or so – striking differences separate the Ming ruling house from its Manchu counterpart, the Aisin Gioro clan, which headed the Qing dynasty, *c.*1636–1911. From the Qing polity's genesis, Manchu rulers devoted much of their time, energy, and resources to relations with "the multitude of lords," including Chinese, Mongol, Zunghar, Korean, Tibetan, and later Uyghur leaders.[19] Such relations not only decisively shaped the Qing dynasty's trajectory and boundaries. They also formed a major – perhaps even signature – feature of the Qing ruling house. Pioneering scholarship in recent decades has explored Qing emperors' strategies for conquering and ruling a polity of unprecedented size and complexity.[20] A central issue has been how Qing emperors addressed issues of religious, cultural, political, and ethnic difference among their rivals, allies, and subjects.[21]

Viewed in this comparative light, if the Qing dynasty was cosmopolitan, Ming emperors seem distinctly parochial. Their subjects were overwhelmingly Chinese, their geopolitical horizons more circumscribed, and their rhetorical and policy repertoire of difference less developed. It is easy to ignore large and influential communities of foreign descent in the capital whose presence and standing relied directly on personal ties to the throne. It is even easier to miss the extensive patronage networks that bound fifteenth-century Ming emperors to Jurchen lands, the Mongolian steppe, Central Asian oasis cities, the Tibetan borderlands, and the southwestern frontier.

Contrasts obscure as well as illuminate. Given the power of the three pairs discussed above – expansive West versus withdrawn China, dynamic society versus ossified dynasty, and an emphatically polycultural Qing versus an anemically heterogeneous Ming – a focus on fifteenth-century Ming emperors' relations with fellow lords serves us well. First, it provides a fuller and more

[18] Brook, *Praying for Power.*
[19] Di Cosmo and Bao, *Manchu–Mongol Relations*. The term "multitude of lords" is from Hevia, *Cherishing Men from Afar.*
[20] Di Cosmo, "Qing Colonial Administration"; "The Extension of Ch'ing Rule"; Perdue, *China Marches West*; Mosca, "The Qing Empire in the Fabric of Global History"; "The Expansion of the Qing Empire."
[21] Crossley, *A Translucent Mirror*; Elliott, *The Manchu Way*; Rawski, "Presidential Address." See also Elverskog, "China and the New Cosmopolitanism"; "Wutai Shan."

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nuanced understanding of rulership in the most powerful regime in the fifteenth-century world, including the exercise of rulership at home and abroad and the relation between the two. Second, it offers a way to move beyond simply rejecting the idea that the early Ming dynasty was isolated or complacent and to think instead in specific ways about how and why the Ming court was connected to east Eurasia. For instance, the Ming throne knew it needed allies and so committed great resources to create and sustain such relations. Third, it makes clear that the pursuit of allies abroad led to important changes at home, not least of which was the incorporation of tens, perhaps, hundreds, of thousands of new subjects, many of whom became guardians of the Ming imperial order.

The Early Ming Court's Lordly Order

As was true of nearly all previous Chinese dynasties, control of space was a powerful way to define the status of the Ming ruling house, most especially the emperor, vis-à-vis all other actors. This is seen most dramatically in the physical seat of the Ming central court in the capital and in the provincial courts of imperial princes. The dynastic founder, Zhu Yuanzhang, had established his capital in today's Nanjing. That was where imperial princes, including those who became the second and third emperors, spent much of their youths. By the second decade of the fifteenth century (and in the wake of a civil war), a new capital was under construction in Beijing, the former capital of the Mongol Yuan dynasty.[22] In both Nanjing and Beijing, the Ming court was housed in an enormous physical complex, a city within a city, protected by towering walls of tamped earth faced with fired bricks.[23] Access to the expansive palace complex was closely (but never perfectly) regulated. The inner quarters were in principal restricted to the emperor, female family members, consorts, and palace eunuchs, although some medical personnel, religious figures, and others did win access. When the emperor's sons reached the age of sixteen, they were invested in territories in provincial seats, where they established courts that advertised the dynastic house's power and prestige.[24] The Ming ruling house's palace complex was exclusive space.

Close attention was paid to elevation of the emperor's unique status as reigning sovereign and Son of Heaven. He alone could walk a central boulevard decorated with finely wrought stone pavers. He alone was permitted to pass through the centermost of five gates along the southern face of the palace walls. He alone sat on a throne on a dais surrounded by his armed and armored

[22] Farmer, *Early Ming Government*.
[23] Geiss, "Peking under the Ming"; Naquin, *Peking*, pp. 128–37; Meng Fanren, *Mingdai gongting*; Robinson, "The Ming Court," pp. 21–28; Zhao Zhongnan, *Mingdai gongting*.
[24] Clunas, *Screen of Kings*.

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imperial guard. During predawn audiences, hundreds of civil officials dressed in court robes arrayed themselves beneath the emperor's dais according to their rank. Palace eunuchs too attended morning audiences. All the ruler's men bellowed "Long Live the Emperor" to announce the Ming sovereign's entrance. In both Nanjing and Beijing, trained elephants stood in rows in front of their sovereign, adding a further sense of grandeur. Visiting foreign envoys were housed at state-run hostels, where their accommodations were finely calibrated to reflect their relative status. Before being permitted to attend imperial audiences, envoys received protocol tutorials designed to preserve the solemnity of the occasion and avoid gaffes embarrassing to the throne and themselves. The monumental architecture, the imperial regalia, the cast of thousands, and the meticulous ceremony were all intended to drive home a simple point: the Ming ruling house had no parallel, and the Ming emperor, as its head, was the world's most powerful man.

The overwhelming scale of the Ming palace complexes and the relative infrequency of Ming emperors' journeys beyond the capital can suggest a misleading sense of physical immobility, even isolation.[25] This perception, combined with Ming scholars' tendency to pass lightly over the details of the emperor's relations with foreign leaders, has obscured connections to fellow lords as an important feature of Ming rulership. Scholars draw attention to Ming rulership's despotic nature.[26] Others suggest that Ming rulers from the mid-fifteenth century onward became increasingly passive and withdrawn, constrained by the founding emperor's dictates, hemmed in by institutional constraints, and overshadowed by better-educated and more vigorous civil officials.[27] Several studies offer yet another characterization, tracing how, in contrast to common wisdom, individual Ming emperors remained engaged in areas of governance they felt important and rewarding, such as ritual reform or the military.[28] These lines of research have enriched our understanding of the Ming throne, its interaction with the imperial bureaucracy, its ties to leading military commanders, and variation among individual emperors. The lack of attention to the Ming emperor as lord of lords, however, both reflects and deepens a misperception of the throne as isolated from Eurasian leaders and unconcerned about allies abroad.[29]

Zhu Yuanzhang never went abroad, nor, once he ascended the throne, did he take troops into the field. He did, however, figure himself as a lord of lords in at least four ways. First, he insisted that newly won powerful subjects or allies

[25] Robinson ("The Ming Court," pp. 32–43) rebuts characterizations of the Ming court as isolated.
[26] Mote, "The Growth of Chinese Despotism." [27] Huang, *1587*.
[28] Wan, "Building an Immortal Land"; Swope, "Bestowing the Double-Edged Sword"; *A Dragon's Head*; Robinson, *Martial Spectacles*.
[29] Robinson (*Martial Spectacles*) demonstrates that the royal hunt and imperial menageries tied Ming emperors to fellow rulers.

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should travel to his capital for audiences. Leaders from the Mongolian steppe, Jurchen lands, Tibetan borderlands, mountainous southwest regions, the Korean peninsula, the Japanese archipelago, and more journeyed to Nanjing where they met with their new lord and patron. Second, Zhu Yuanzhang considered neighboring sovereigns as fellow, albeit lesser, rulers. In letters to Korean kings, Japanese rulers, and most especially the Great Khans of the Great Yuan, he spoke as one ruler to another, offering counsel on issues of governance and dynastic survival.[30] Third, he welcomed men from afar to become his subjects, resettling more than 100,000 Mongolian men and women on his territory. Many received lands along the northern borders, but substantial numbers served in imperial military units in the hinterlands, including the capital in today's Nanjing.[31] Fourth, he widely advertised the reception of Chinggisid nobles at this court. For instance, in 1370, Ming forces captured the reigning Great Khan's grandson, a young boy named Maidaribala. Zhu Yuanzhang issued edicts to a dozen or more countries describing the boy's capture, his courteous reception at the Ming court, and his new ritual role as caretaker for the souls of deceased Yuan rulers.[32] Zhu Yuanzhang and his advisers believed that these displays of domination and generosity would elevate the Ming sovereign's standing in east Eurasia.

Mongolian men were so well integrated into the Ming founder's court that he saw them in his dreams. One night the emperor dreamt of a tall, imposing man who attentively served at his side. In the dream, the man identified himself as Suozhu. When he awoke the next morning, Zhu Yuanzhang immediately ordered one of his officers to see whether anyone in the imperial bodyguard fit the description. A Mongolian named Suozhu was brought before the emperor. Zhu Yuanzhang confirmed that the man's appearance and bearing matched his dream. The emperor promoted him on the spot. Suozhu's forefathers had held both administrative and military posts under the Great Yuan.[33]

Suozhu's promotion was part of a broader pattern. A striking element of the Ming throne's relations with men of power is its enduring interest in granting titles, such as prince, earl, marquis, commander, chiliarch, and centurion. The throne issued these titles to Chinese men clearly within the polity such as the so-called merit aristocracy, Ming subjects who rendered extraordinary service to the throne.[34] It also granted titles to newly created subjects such as Naghachu, a senior Mongolian commander who had spent most of his career fighting Zhu Yuanzhang and other enemies of the Great Yuan.[35] Titles were

[30] Robinson, *In the Shadow of the Mongol Empire*, Chapters Seven and Ten.
[31] Henry Serruys's work remains the essential point of departure. For a comprehensive list of Serruys's publications, see Temul, "Silüsi shenfu." See also Qi Wenying, *Mingdai weisuo*.
[32] Robinson, *In the Shadow of the Mongol Empire*, Chapter Six.
[33] Li Xian, *Gu rang ji*, 16.9b–11b (*WYSK*, 1244:652–53). [34] Taylor, "Ming T'ai-tsu."
[35] Serruys, "Mongols Ennobled."

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distributed to men within the polity's penumbra such as the King of Hami, and to men clearly beyond dynastic borders like the kings of Japan, Chosŏn, and Annam (Đại Việt) and personnel from the even more distant Timurid and Moghul polities of Central Asia.

The result was an encompassing lordly order emanating from the Ming throne. Its central conceit was that the power and authority to assign titles and ranks within this lordly hierarchy resided clearly and exclusively with the Ming emperor.[36] In reality, the Ming throne often granted its titles and ranks to men who already possessed titles and ranks – often granted by other lords and patrons. The Ming throne acknowledged as much as created an east Eurasian lordly order.[37]

Each title represented a burden to the Ming throne. Emoluments in rice, payments in silver, residences in the capital, transportation, lodging for visiting title holders' envoys, gifts of clothing, jewelry, horses, textiles, and food – these all entailed costs. The throne often granted title holders a place in court ceremonies and funeral arrangements, posthumous promotions, and hereditary benefits for descendants, which represented an expenditure of ritual and cultural capital. Mongol, Jurchen, Timurid, and other lords who held aristocratic and military titles from the Ming throne also enjoyed access to state-regulated trade along dynastic borders and in the capital. These markets, including their construction, supervision, security, and staffing, also imposed burdens on the Ming throne. Why, then, did the Ming court turn so frequently to titles and ranks in relations with lords from distant lands?

To grant a title is to exercise power and define status, to create and control a hierarchy.[38] Norbert Elias famously drew attention to the court of Louis XIV (r. 1643–1715), where ranking was a form of control.[39] Much earlier, Chinese courts developed even more elaborate strategies, grading administrative and military personnel into formally articulated ranks, which the central government regulated. It became a hallmark of Chinese bureaucratic systems. To bolster its status, the Tang ruling house (618–907) initially ranked rival aristocratic families according to pedigree, a process over which it exercised a monopoly.[40] It also ranked foreign rulers, which determined where their envoys stood at imperial audiences, what food they ate at banquets, and

[36] I follow Sneath (*The Headless State*) in using "house" and "aristocratic order" rather than "clan" for describing steppe society. Such concepts both better reflect historical reality and facilitate broader comparative analysis.

[37] Trips to the Ming capital created opportunities for interaction among envoys from diverse places. See Kang, *East Asia*, pp. 70–71.

[38] Duindam, *Dynasties*, pp. 237–55.

[39] Elias, *The Court Society*. Scholars like Duindam (*Myths of Power*) challenge the efficacy – but not the principle – of such efforts to tame the aristocracy.

[40] Wechsler, "T'ai-tsung," pp. 212–13; Lewis, *China's Cosmopolitan Empire*, pp. 49–50; Bol, *"This Culture"*, pp. 32–75.

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