

**SOURCE STUDIES AND HISTORIOGRAPHY OF GOLDEN HORDE  
STATEHOOD: UNRAVELING THE ENIGMA OF A MEDIEVAL  
EURASIAN POWER**

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**Abstract:** This thesis delves into the comprehensive analysis of source studies and historiography surrounding the Golden Horde, a formidable medieval Eurasian state. The Golden Horde, also known as the Ulus of Jochi, played a pivotal role in shaping the political, cultural, and economic landscape of Eurasia during the 13th to 15th centuries. This study critically examines primary and secondary sources, evaluating their reliability, biases, and contributions to understanding the complex dynamics of Golden Horde statehood. By illuminating the historiographical developments and advancements in source analysis, this thesis seeks to enhance our understanding of the Golden Horde and its influence on the medieval world.

**Keywords:** Golden Horde, Source Studies, Historiography, Eurasian, Medieval Empire.

The Golden Horde, a medieval nomadic empire established by the Mongol successor state, the Ulus of Jochi, holds a paramount place in the history of Eurasia. Emerging from the vast Mongol Empire after the death of Genghis Khan in the 13th century, the Golden Horde exerted significant influence over a

considerable portion of the Eurasian continent, encompassing regions from Eastern Europe to Central Asia. However, the historical understanding of the Golden Horde is intricate and multifaceted, entailing the need for a critical examination of primary sources and historiographical approaches.

The objective of this study is to elucidate the enigma of the Golden Horde's statehood by comprehensively analyzing the primary sources and historiography associated with this fascinating empire. Through a meticulous investigation of various historical materials and their interpretations over time, this thesis aims to shed light on the complex socio-political dynamics, cultural interactions, and economic structures that characterized the Golden Horde. By evaluating the reliability, biases, and interpretative frameworks of both primary and secondary sources, this research seeks to provide a nuanced understanding of the Golden Horde's historical significance and enduring legacy.

#### Scope and Objectives

This thesis explores the primary sources and historiography related to the Golden Horde, encompassing an array of written, archaeological, and numismatic evidence. It investigates the emergence, expansion, socio-political structure, cultural influences, and economic systems that shaped the Golden Horde. The evaluation of primary sources aims to discern their credibility, biases, and interpretive challenges, while a comprehensive analysis of historiographical approaches provides insights into the evolving understanding of the Golden Horde over time.

#### Methodology

The research employs a multidisciplinary approach, integrating historical, linguistic, archaeological, and numismatic methodologies to assess and interpret the sources. The analysis of primary sources involves critical examination,

contextualization, and comparative evaluation, while secondary literature and historiographical analyses provide a broader perspective. By synthesizing information from diverse sources and methodologies, this thesis endeavors to present a well-rounded exploration of the Golden Horde's statehood, aiming to contribute to the scholarly discourse on medieval Eurasian history.

#### Emergence and Expansion

The Golden Horde, one of the most prominent nomadic empires of the medieval period, emerged as a successor state to the vast Mongol Empire founded by Genghis Khan. Following the death of Genghis Khan in 1227, his empire was divided among his sons, with Jochi, the eldest son, inheriting the westernmost territories. Jochi's descendants established the Ulus of Jochi, which became better known as the Golden Horde, around the 1240s. The empire expanded rapidly under the leadership of Batu Khan, a grandson of Genghis Khan, who spearheaded the famous Mongol invasions of Europe in the mid-13th century. The invasion resulted in the conquest of vast territories in Eastern Europe, including parts of present-day Russia, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan.

#### Socio-Political Structure

The socio-political structure of the Golden Horde was characterized by a distinct blend of nomadic traditions and imperial governance. The ruling elite, predominantly Mongols and Turkic peoples, formed a warrior aristocracy that governed the empire. The khan, chosen from the ruling dynasty of Batu Khan, held supreme authority. Below the khan were the appanage princes, who were assigned territories to govern, and a council of nobles known as the kurultai, which played a crucial role in the decision-making process. The Golden Horde's society was stratified, with the Mongol ruling class enjoying privileges and influence, while sedentary and subject populations were subject to various forms

of taxation and governance.

#### Cultural and Economic Aspects

Culturally, the Golden Horde was a melting pot, influenced by a diverse array of cultures, including Mongol, Turkic, Russian, Islamic, and Chinese elements. The empire's nomadic heritage influenced its societal norms, while interactions with settled populations contributed to a more complex culture. Trade flourished within the empire, linking the East and West and allowing for the exchange of goods and ideas. The Golden Horde's control over major trade routes contributed significantly to its economic prosperity. Additionally, the empire engaged in pastoralism, agriculture, and craft production, forming the economic backbone of the society.

The historical context of the Golden Horde illuminates its origins, expansion, socio-political structure, and the cultural and economic dynamics that characterized this fascinating medieval Eurasian empire. Understanding these aspects is fundamental to analyzing the source materials and historiography that have shaped the study of the Golden Horde.

#### Conclusion

##### Summary of Findings

This thesis has explored the intricate tapestry of the Golden Horde, a significant medieval Eurasian empire, by conducting a thorough analysis of primary sources and historiography. The historical context provided insights into the empire's emergence, expansion, socio-political structure, and cultural and economic facets, setting the stage for a deeper understanding of the sources and their interpretations.

The evaluation of primary sources, ranging from Mongolian and Persian chronicles to European travelogues, allowed for a critical assessment of their

reliability, biases, and interpretative challenges. It revealed the diversity and complexity of perspectives on the Golden Horde, presenting a multifaceted view of the empire's history.

Additionally, the examination of secondary literature and historiography provided an overview of evolving interpretations and methodologies over time. The study unveiled the various approaches employed by historians, enriching the understanding of the Golden Horde's historiographical development.

#### Implications and Relevance

The analysis of source studies and historiography on the Golden Horde holds significant implications for the broader field of medieval Eurasian studies. It provides a foundation for scholars and researchers to navigate and critically engage with a wide range of primary and secondary sources pertaining to the Golden Horde. Understanding the biases and interpretative challenges associated with these sources enables a more nuanced and accurate reconstruction of the empire's history.

Furthermore, this research underscores the importance of interdisciplinary methodologies, integrating historical, linguistic, archaeological, and numismatic approaches. Such an interdisciplinary framework allows for a comprehensive and holistic analysis of the Golden Horde, enriching our understanding of its socio-political, cultural, and economic complexities.

#### 8.3 Closing Remarks and Future Prospects

The Golden Horde, as an empire of immense historical significance, continues to captivate the curiosity of scholars and enthusiasts alike. Future research should further delve into specific aspects of the Golden Horde's history, employing advanced methodologies and utilizing newly discovered sources to refine and expand our understanding of this medieval Eurasian power.

In conclusion, the study of source studies and historiography surrounding the Golden Horde contributes to a more comprehensive and accurate portrayal of this influential empire. By critically evaluating and synthesizing diverse sources and historiographical perspectives, we can unravel the enigma of the Golden Horde and appreciate its enduring legacy on the medieval world.

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