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RETHINKING THE LEGACY OF THE GOLDEN HORDE IN CONTEMPORARY HISTORIOGRAPHY OF KAZAKHSTAN

Annotation. The article examines the evolution of contemporary approaches to the study of the Golden Horde legacy in Kazakh historiography. The aim is to identify the principal stages in the development of scholarly interpretations and the factors that have influenced their transformation. The study employs historiographical, comparative-historical, problem-chronological, and source-critical methods to examine research on the political heritage of the Ulus of Jochi. The analysis demonstrates a gradual shift from identifying a single political predecessor of the Kazakh Khanate toward a broader examination of political institutions, dynastic legitimacy, administrative traditions, and processes of state formation. Particular attention is paid to the reassessment of the White Horde (Aq Orda) and Blue Horde (Kök Orda) concepts. The study concludes that contemporary historiography increasingly relies on integrated source criticism, interdisciplinary methods, and a broader Eurasian perspective

Keywords: Golden Horde, Ulus of Jochi, Kazakh historiography, political continuity, White Horde, Blue Horde, source criticism, statehood

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ҚАЗАҚСТАННЫҢ ҚАЗІРГІ ТАРИХНАМАСЫНДА АЛТЫН ОРДА МҰРАСЫН ҚАЙТА ЗЕРДЕЛЕУ

Андатпа. Мақалада Қазақстан тарихнамасындағы Алтын Орда мұрасын зерттеудің қазіргі заманғы тәсілдерінің эволюциясы қарастырылады. Зерттеудің мақсаты – ғылыми түсіндірмелердің дамуындағы негізгі кезеңдерді және олардың өзгеруіне ықпал еткен факторларды анықтау. Зерттеуде Жошы ұлысының саяси мұрасын зерттеуге арналған еңбектерді талдау үшін тарихнамалық, салыстырмалы-тарихи, проблемалық-хронологиялық және деректанулық әдістер қолданылады. Талдау Қазақ хандығының біртұтас саяси ізашарын анықтаудан саяси институттарды, әулеттік легитимділікті, әкімшілік дәстүрлерді және мемлекеттіліктің қалыптасу үдерістерін кеңінен зерделеуге біртіндеп көшу үрдісін көрсетеді. Ақ Орда және Көк Орда тұжырымдамаларын қайта қарауға ерекше назар аударылады. Зерттеу нәтижесінде қазіргі тарихнаманың кешенді деректанулық сынға, пәнаралық әдістерге және неғұрлым кең еуразиялық көзқарасқа барған сайын көбірек сүйенетіні анықталды.

Түйінді сөздер: Алтын Орда, Жошы ұлысы, Қазақстан тарихнамасы, саяси сабақтастық, Ақ Орда, Көк Орда, деректанулық сын, мемлекеттілік

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ПЕРЕОСМЫСЛЕНИЕ ЗОЛОТООРДЫНСКОГО НАСЛЕДИЯ В СОВРЕМЕННОЙ ИСТОРИОГРАФИИ КАЗАХСТАНА

Аннотация. В статье рассматривается эволюция современных подходов к изучению золотоордынского наследия в казахстанской историографии. Цель исследования заключается в выявлении основных этапов развития научных интерпретаций и факторов, повлиявших на их трансформацию. В исследовании применяются историографический, сравнительно-исторический, проблемно-хронологический и источниковедческий методы для анализа научных исследований, посвящённых политическому наследию Улуса Джучи. Анализ показывает постепенный переход от определения единственного политического предшественника Казахского ханства к более широкому изучению политических институтов, династической легитимности, административных традиций и процессов формирования государственности. Особое внимание уделяется переосмыслению концепций Ак Орды и Көк Орды. В заключении отмечается, что современная историография всё чаще опирается на комплексную источниковедческую критику, междисциплинарные методы и более широкий евразийский подход

Ключевые слова: Золотая Орда, Улус Джучи, казахстанская историография, политическая преемственность, Ак Орда, Көк Орда, источниковедческая критика, государственность

In recent decades, the legacy of the Golden Horde has attracted increasing attention in Kazakh and international historical scholarship. This interest has been stimulated by the expansion of the source base, the publication of new studies, and the reassessment of the political role of the Ulus of Jochi in the history of medieval Eurasia. Earlier scholarship largely examined the Golden Horde through the question of the origins of the Kazakh Khanate and the search for political continuity. Contemporary research increasingly addresses political institutions, dynastic traditions, governance, historical memory, and the transformation of the post-Jochid political space [1, 2, 4].

An important contribution to this discussion was made by Zh. M. Sabitov, whose works examine the political history of the Ulus of Jochi, the localization of the White Horde and Blue Horde, Jochid genealogy, and the interpretation of written sources [5–9]. His 2015 article on the place of the Golden Horde in Kazakh historiography stimulated renewed discussion of established interpretations and encouraged a broader consideration of the political heritage of the Ulus of Jochi [7].

The historiographical problem is particularly relevant because interpretations of the Golden Horde legacy have changed together with the expansion of the source base and the development of historical methodology. The traditional model of a direct succession from the White Horde to the Kazakh Khanate has increasingly been supplemented by approaches emphasizing the complexity of political relations within the Ulus of Jochi and the interaction of several political and dynastic processes.

The purpose of this article is to examine the evolution of approaches to the Golden Horde legacy in contemporary Kazakh historiography, identify the main stages of this evolution, and characterize the principal methodological tendencies of current scholarship.

The methodological framework is based on the principles of historicism, objectivity, and critical analysis of historical sources. The study employs historiographical, comparative-historical, problem-chronological, and source-critical methods.

The historiographical method is used to identify changes in scholarly interpretations and research priorities. Comparative-historical analysis makes it possible to compare different approaches to the political organization of the Ulus of Jochi and the relationship between its constituent political formations. The problem-chronological approach allows the development of historiographical concepts to be considered in temporal sequence. Source criticism is used to assess the methodological foundations of interpretations based on Persian, Turkic, and other written sources.

The analysis focuses primarily on works devoted to the political history of the Golden Horde, the localization and terminology of the White Horde and Blue Horde, the history of the Jochid dynasty, and the relationship between the Golden Horde and the formation of Kazakh statehood [5, 8, 15, 16].

The development of interpretations of the Golden Horde legacy in Kazakh historiography can be conventionally divided into three major stages. These stages reflect changes in research priorities, the expansion of the source base, and the development of methodological approaches.

The first stage, associated mainly with the second half of the twentieth century, was characterized by the concept of direct political continuity. Within Soviet and early Kazakh historiography, the White Horde was generally presented as an independent political formation in the eastern part of the Ulus of Jochi and as the immediate political predecessor of the Kazakh Khanate. This interpretation was incorporated into major works on the history of Kazakhstan and remained influential for a considerable period [2, 11, 13].

The model provided a relatively coherent explanation of political development in the territory of present-day Kazakhstan. However, its explanatory potential was limited by the relatively narrow range of sources available to researchers and by the linear understanding of political succession. The complex structure of the Ulus of Jochi, relations among different Jochid domains, and the role of various branches of the dynasty received comparatively less attention.

The second stage developed during the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries and was characterized by a critical reassessment of established interpretations. Researchers such as V. P. Yudin, T. I. Sultanov, V. V. Trepavlov, R. Yu. Pochekaev, and K. Z. Uskenbay expanded the use of Eastern written sources and applied comparative analysis to medieval chronicles [4, 11, 13, 15, 16].

A particularly important issue was the terminology of the White Horde and Blue Horde. Comparative analysis demonstrated that the use and meaning of these terms could vary depending on the source, period, political context, and historiographical tradition. The studies of Sabitov and Kushkumbayev contributed to the reassessment of the localization and semantics of these concepts [8, 9]. As a result, researchers increasingly questioned the possibility of reconstructing the political structure of the Ulus of Jochi through a simple linear succession of clearly separated political entities.

This stage also marked a methodological shift from the reconstruction of historical events toward critical examination of the sources themselves. Greater attention was paid to the origin of chronicles, their textual traditions, political terminology, and the circumstances in which particular accounts were produced. The comparison of different written testimonies became an important instrument for reconstructing the political history of the Jochids [6, 8, 9].

The third, contemporary stage became particularly visible from the second half of the 2010s. Its characteristic feature is the movement toward an integrative interpretation of the Golden Horde legacy. Instead of focusing exclusively on the identification of one

political predecessor of the Kazakh Khanate, scholars increasingly examine the wider processes of political transformation within the Ulus of Jochi [5–7].

The transformation of the concept of political continuity represents one of the most important developments in contemporary historiography. The traditional model emphasized territorial and political succession, whereas newer interpretations pay greater attention to the continuity of institutions, dynastic legitimacy, administrative practices, diplomatic traditions, and political culture.

From this perspective, the emergence of the Kazakh Khanate can be examined as part of a longer process of transformation of the political system of the post-Jochid world. Such an approach does not necessarily deny the historical significance of the White Horde. Rather, it places the White Horde within a broader system of political relationships and avoids reducing the complex history of the Ulus of Jochi to a single line of succession.

The research of Sabitov has played a significant role in this reassessment. His studies of the localization of the White Horde and Blue Horde, the political organization of the Ulus of Jochi, and medieval written sources challenge simplified interpretations and emphasize the need to compare different categories of evidence [5–9, 17].

The broader approach is also supported by international scholarship. M. Favereau, for example, examines the Golden Horde as a major political formation within the wider history of the Mongol world and Eurasia [1]. Such studies contribute to placing the history of the Ulus of Jochi beyond the framework of a purely national historical narrative.

Three general approaches can therefore be distinguished in the development of interpretations of the Golden Horde legacy.

The *traditional approach* emphasizes direct political continuity and considers the White Horde the immediate predecessor of the Kazakh Khanate. Its main analytical advantage was the construction of a coherent narrative of regional political development. At the same time, its limitations became increasingly evident as the source base expanded and the complexity of Jochid political organization became clearer [2, 11, 13].

The *revisionist approach* developed through critical examination of traditional concepts. Its principal methodological contribution was the reassessment of written sources, particularly the terminology and localization of the White Horde and Blue Horde. This approach demonstrated that medieval political terminology cannot always be interpreted according to modern territorial concepts and that different sources may reflect different political perspectives [8, 9, 15, 16].

The *integrative approach*, which has become increasingly prominent in recent scholarship, combines political history, source criticism, historical geography, genealogy, and comparative historiography. It focuses on the long-term transformation of political institutions and dynastic structures rather than on identifying one exclusive line of

succession. Within this framework, the Kazakh Khanate may be considered one of the political formations that emerged in the course of the transformation of the post-Jochid political space.

These approaches should not necessarily be regarded as mutually exclusive. Rather, they reflect different stages and methodological orientations in the development of historical scholarship. The contemporary tendency is toward the critical comparison and integration of available interpretations on the basis of a broader and more diverse source base.

Several tendencies characterize current research on the Golden Horde legacy. The first is the expansion of the source base. Researchers increasingly use Persian and Turkic historical works, genealogical materials, diplomatic documents, and different textual versions of medieval chronicles [3, 6, 12, 14].

The second tendency is the growing importance of interdisciplinary research. Historical geography, archaeology, numismatics, genealogy, anthropology, and other fields provide additional evidence for interpreting political and social processes in the Ulus of Jochi. These materials do not replace written sources but can contribute to their contextualization and interpretation.

The third tendency is the increasing integration of Kazakh historiography into international scholarship. Research on the Golden Horde is increasingly considered within the wider history of the Mongol Empire, the Jochid successor states, and medieval Eurasia [1, 4]. This broader framework makes it possible to compare national historiographical traditions and to identify both common research problems and differences in interpretation.

The fourth tendency concerns historical memory. Contemporary research increasingly examines not only the Golden Horde as a historical phenomenon but also the ways in which its legacy is interpreted, represented, and incorporated into modern historical narratives [1, 7]. This direction requires a clear distinction between the analysis of medieval historical processes and the study of their later interpretations.

Future research may benefit from the systematic digitization of written sources, the creation of integrated databases, and the development of digital methods for comparing historical texts. Particular attention should be paid to the critical study of Eastern written sources and to comparative research on the political institutions of the Golden Horde and its successor states.

The historiographical analysis demonstrates that interpretations of the Golden Horde legacy in Kazakhstan have undergone substantial transformation. Earlier scholarship concentrated primarily on establishing a direct political succession from the White Horde to the Kazakh Khanate. Later research questioned the methodological foundations of this

model and expanded attention to the terminology, localization, and political structure of the Ulus of Jochi.

Contemporary historiography increasingly approaches the Golden Horde legacy as a multidimensional historical phenomenon. Political institutions, dynastic legitimacy, administrative traditions, diplomatic practices, political culture, and the broader processes of state formation are considered alongside territorial and dynastic continuity.

The main methodological tendency is therefore a movement from linear explanations toward more complex and source-based interpretations. The development of source criticism, comparative analysis, interdisciplinary research, and international scholarly cooperation has expanded the possibilities for studying the Ulus of Jochi and its successor states.

The significance of this historiographical transformation lies in the possibility of considering the history of Kazakh statehood within the wider political history of medieval Eurasia. Further research should focus on the systematic study of written sources, comparative analysis of Jochid political institutions, digitalization of historical materials, and the relationship between medieval history and later historiographical interpretations.

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