



The Horde: How the Mongols Changed the World, by Marie Favereau. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2021, 384 pp.

This is a valuable addition to the growing body of literature from Western scholars that seeks to examine the role of the Mongol Empire in the development of the Eurasian continent and its peoples. Favereau’s retelling of history through biographical data and examination of administrative policies of the thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Mongol leaders of the Golden Horde is one of the only academic pieces that examines the internal operations and transformations of the Golden Horde/Ulus of Jochi.

Favereau is an Associate Professor of History at Paris Nanterre University with extensive experience researching and publishing on this period. In this book, by examining the impact on Russian principalities she aims to vindicate the Golden Horde by highlighting its administrative complexity, economic prowess, and adept foreign policy.

Favereau’s *The Horde* immediately challenges the widespread notion that Mongols were ruthless conquerors interested only in plundering and pillaging “civilized” sedentary communities. However, her approach is distinct in that she provides the most comprehensive review of the Western territory of the Mongol Empire, delving into the initial formation of the Golden Horde’s leadership, its economics, and its unorthodox ability to adapt to domestic and foreign threats over the centuries. The uniqueness of the Horde’s plasticity, domestic policies, and international engagements stands in stark contrast to preconceived notions of nomadic populations as uncivilized, backward, or ungovernable.

She begins by reviewing the rise of Chinggis Khan and his unique ability to unify nomadic clans under a single standard. His military successes and instinctual domination of politics strengthened his presence in the Mongol Steppe, attracting or coercing surrounding communities to join his cause. Instead of traditional methods of subjugation through segregation, Chinggis Khan's transformative administration was tasked with integrating newly conquered populations and expanding the labor force and military. Absorption of conquered peoples, especially craftsman and warriors, were key to the Mongol economy and military structure, setting a precedence fully embraced by the Golden Horde in the years to come.

With a large body of literature already dedicated to Chinggis Khan's impacts and exploits, Favereau briefly summarized the Mongol campaigns against the Qipchags on the western steppe. After Chinggis Khan's and Jochi's (Chinggis's oldest son) death, the Golden Horde was split into the White Horde (modern day Russia and Ukraine) ruled by Batu, and the Blue Horde (modern day Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan), ruled by Orda, both Jochi's sons.

According to Favereau, one of the key distinctions between the Golden Horde and its counterparts is the methods employed by the subsequent Golden Horde rulers for administering and extracting wealth from territories. Golden Horde rulers depended upon local elites from the subjugated populations to manage the territories the Mongols controlled, fostering a diverse system of vassalage, relationships, and adaptable connections. Contrary to current Russian nationalist's views regarding Mongol domination as a dark period in history, Favereau claims that this system was instrumental in the advancement of Russian principalities. Mongol favoritism regarding personalities in Moscow led to its elevation in authority and respect at the expense of other Russian cities. However, while Favereau claims that the Golden Horde had a dramatic effect on the early formation of the Russian state, the reader is left grasping for more conclusive evidence than what is offered; perhaps additional scholarly research would irrevocably solidify these claims instead of highlighting the rise of Moscow.

Interestingly, Favereau probes the relationship between Mongol leaders and the Russian Orthodox church, which experienced tremendous growth during the Mongol domination. The Mongol leaders established supportive relationships with the Russian Orthodox church, rewarding its loyalty and legitimizing support with tax-free status, similar to other religious sects within The Horde's territories. While her examination of historical evidence is vital for the understanding of Golden Horde policy, a more thorough and detailed examination of the Mongol relations with the Russian Orthodox church might provide a direct and indisput-

able causation between Mongol tax exemption and the growing church presence in comparison to other religion's trajectories.

The theme of religious tolerance, and in some cases, religious conversion, in the Golden Horde emerges as possibly the most important legacy of the Golden Horde's leadership. Acceptance of a diverse, multicultural, and multi-religious population demanded leaders to pragmatically choose policies that accommodated for these differences, specifically for the economic success of the empire. Mongol leaders were hesitant to alienate or offend tradesman and craftsman, hailing from all regions, stretching from the Mediterranean coast to the Persian Gulf, to China. These leaders recognized that the key to the Golden Horde's success was fluidity of economic commerce and implementation of appropriate tax policies. However, there is substantial evidence to show that religious toleration was embraced by the Mongol Empire in its entirety, not unique to the Golden Horde. While the Golden Horde is famous for its mass conversion to Islam, Mongol leaders across the empire adapted to the religious peculiarities of their sedentary hosts for the sake of legitimization and economic advancement.

The location and economic policies of the Golden Horde were pivotal for the facilitation of an immense trade network spanning the Eurasian markets. From the Russian fur traders in the North, to Italian merchants, to Sultanate slave-traders from Egypt, the Golden Horde maintained close watch over the economy and ensured their foreign policy prioritized trade. Favereau writes that the Mongols served "as high-level facilitators of a large-scale trade network." Maintaining this network successfully required the Mongols to invest in merchant-friendly ports, maintain safe roads and develop settlements that accommodated for the various traders hailing from across the Mongol Empire and abroad.

As Favereau strives to demonstrate the Golden Horde's uniqueness, she falls short in comparing it to the competing Khanates. The reader develops an extensive understanding of the Golden Horde's operations, but without a background in the dealings of the various Mongolian Khanates, the argument for distinction lacks clarity. While the book exonerates the Golden Horde's administrative methodologies and governance, it reveals the need for further research on Mongolian relations with the early Russian state and the expansion of the Russian Orthodox Church.

Marie Favereau asserts that the Mongol Empire, especially the Golden Horde, had an irreversible and in many ways, positive, impact on the world order. Comprehensive and engaging, Favereau's *The Horde* is highly recommended for students and readers with an interest and intermediate to advanced understanding of nomadic empires.

Favereau's contribution to the expanding body of literature on the Mongol Empire is valuable for historians and practitioners engaged in developing foreign policy recommendations and international development programs. While widely accepted as warriors first, Mongol leaders recognized the value of cultural and religious sensitivities and harnessed the strengths of local populations to construct an advanced network of trade, benefiting those who accepted the Mongol domination. Their example of religious tolerance, cultural awareness, and adept negotiating skills are valuable traits for all members in the military expecting to operate within local communities. 📖

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