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Review Cluster

Dialogue with Favereau's *The Horde*

Marie Favereau, *The Horde: How the Mongols Changed the World* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2021), 384 pp.

INTRODUCTION: DIALOGUE WITH FAVEREAU'S *THE HORDE*

This review cluster featuring Marie Favereau's impressive monograph, *The Horde: How the Mongols Changed the World*, consists of three reviews and this introduction. If we confine ourselves to the major European languages apart from Russian, the monograph before us is the first comprehensive history of the so-called Golden Horde to be published in almost eighty years, since Bertold Spuler's *Die Goldene Horde: Die Mongolen in Rußland, 1223–1502* in 1943. This tremendous achievement is realized thanks to the unique orbit of Favereau's academic odyssey (from Paris to Kazan, Cairo, Oxford and beyond). These itineraries allowed her not only to deepen her linguistic command of multiple primary sources in languages such as Arabic, but also to cover a wide range of secondary literature, including Russian works.

In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the Slavic world was overwhelmed by the Horde, the inheritance of Jochi, Chinggis's eldest and chief heir. The dynasty, a part of the Mongol empire (1206–1368) with a Chinggisid lineage, subsequently continued to exert a certain amount of power in the Pontic steppe—called Dasht-i Qipchāp in the Islamicate world—for a period of three centuries, even after the collapse of the empire itself. The successor states maintained strategic positions in the continental trade that linked Russia and Central Asia until the sixteenth century. While maintaining its original nomadic ethos, the Horde evolved through repeated adaptation and transformation. This book discusses the socio-political structure of the Horde, while also contextualizing it in world history. The establishment of the Mongol empire in the second half of the thirteenth century unified almost the entire Eurasian continent, which revitalized economic exchange. A single economic system emerged on the Eurasian landmass, that connected East Asia, the Islamicate world, the Slavic world and Europe. For about a hundred years, from the middle of the thirteenth century to the middle of the fourteenth, a network of exchange and production was established. This was an era in which Western merchants allegedly conducted safe travel from Italy to China. Favereau calls this the “Mongol exchange,” a world-historical phenomenon that should be compared to the “trans-Saharan trade” and the “Columbian exchange” (p. 3). The Mongol economy was based on the circulation of peoples, goods, knowledge and ideas, all of which was sustained through a system of redistribution that ran from the

khans to the ruling elite and then down to the lower classes. Furthermore, this redistribution principle also occupied an important position in their spiritual world. The sharing of wealth was a means of appeasing the dead, the heavens and the earth.

Particularly with regard to the Horde, the influence of the Mongols on the Slavic world was mainly in terms of trade. The Horde's trade policy brought the Baltic Sea, the Volga, the Caspian Sea and the Black Sea into an integrated economic zone, which was also linked to Central Asia, China and the Middle East. Unlike the outdated stereotypes of the past, the Mongols achieved massive prosperity through the reinterpretation of their original military strategy for long-distance trade. A typical example is the development of the postal system, which also functioned for trade purposes. Another major characteristic of the Mongols was their constant movement. The Mongols embedded their "mobility" into their governing strategy. The word "Horde" originally referred to the royal tents and military camps of the khans, but it eventually came to refer to the Mongol ruling system itself. Favereau uses the word "Horde," which refers to both the royal camp and the system of rule, as the title of this book, being a term that is appropriate for indicating the "empire built on mobility" (p. 11) by the Mongols.

Sima Qian (司馬遷) writes in his citation of a classic that "an empire cannot be ruled on horseback" (p. 305), but the Mongols made it possible. The key to their rule was the synthesis of diversity. Cultural transformation did not necessarily complete the mutual acculturation between the rulers and the ruled peoples. Although the Mongols accepted the Slavic peoples and the principles of Islam, they were not fully absorbed into the Slavic or Islamic norms. Likewise, their subjects did not become indistinguishable from Mongols. The Jochid ruling class underwent transformation, but this did not mean that they lost their own identity. The Mongols built cities, yet they did not lose their nomadic ethos. Nomadism should not be seen as a primitive stage on the road to modernity, but rather as a way of life that was chosen by the rulers of a particular period because of its effectiveness. In terms of the Jochid rule over the North, there was less of a focus on controlling humans, centered on agriculture, than there was in the case of the Toluid rule over the South. Their rule was centered on controlling trade and resources. The Jochids managed to "control resources without controlling societies and possess power without possessing space" (p. 307).

This brief introduction is followed by three reviewers—Yihao Qiu, Ruslan Shakhmatov and Hiroyuki Nagamine—who each have their own perspectives toward Favereau's book. Qiu is originally a historian of the Yuan dynasty (1271–1368) in China but with a strong command of Persian and Arabic, which combination enables him to shed fresh light on the history of the Horde from the East (e.g., "Independent Ruler, Indefinable Role: Understanding the History of the Golden Horde from the Perspectives of the Yuan Dynasty," *Revue des*

mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée 143 (2018), pp. 29–48). His review, “Seeking Systematic Symmetry in the History of Various Chinggisid Khanates,” is based on his profound understanding of Favereau’s works, as is well demonstrated by his translation of her first book (*La Horde d’Or et le Sultanat mamelouk: Naissance d’une alliance*, Cairo: Institut français d’archéologie orientale, 2018) into Chinese. Ruslan Shakhmatov, the second reviewer, has a unique position among this gathering of historians, due to his PhD in the field of biogeoscience, combined with extensive knowledge on the Horde (e.g., “Climate and Famines in the Rus’ Principalities and the Golden Horde in the 14th Century: A Comparison of Historical Records and Climate Proxies,” in Nicola Di Cosmo and Yoichi Isahaya, eds., *Climate Changes, Plagues and Wars: The Crisis of the Fourteenth Century in the Afro-Eurasian Context*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, forthcoming). Given this interdisciplinary approach, his review, “*The Horde* by Marie Favereau: Mongol Exchange and Environmental Change,” gives us a new insight into the book from the environmental viewpoint. Last but not least is the review by Hiroyuki Nagamine, a Japanese historian in the field of the Horde. This prolific author has written both in Russian and English, based on the dense accumulation of the Japanese literature in this field (e.g., “Where Was Sarai, the ‘Capital’ of the Jochid Ulus? Some Perspectives for Research on Sarai,” *Crossroads: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Asian Interactions* 22, no. 1–2 (2024), pp. 51–80). The originality of his review, “Favereau’s New Grand Design on the History of the Horde and beyond,” hinges on his expertise across East and West. I should emphasize in this context that, in the series of translations of *The Horde* into such languages as French and Mongolian, the Japanese translation will be added as a result of his incredible effort. This review cluster is also to be aligned with quite a few reviews of this seminal work on the Horde. I do hope that, like *The Horde* itself, this “dialogue with Favereau’s *The Horde*” will reach a wide range of circles of interest in various fields.

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