ABSTRACT

LOURAMORE-KIRSANOVA, CRYSTAL ANN. Ta[r]tar[us]: The Russian Construction of the Medieval Mongol Legacy. (Under the direction of Dr. Julie Mell).

Medieval Russian literature depicts the Mongols as ungodly and destructive, and it emphasizes the Russians as antithetical to their barbaric conquerors. Traditionalists have used this literature to discredit Mongol rule in Russia and blame the Mongols for Russia’s “backwardness” in history. This thesis reexamines the literature Traditionalists have used to present the Mongols as barbaric and finds that Traditionalists fail to use these works in their entirety, neglecting literature that does not fit their anti-Mongol agenda. This thesis argues that Traditionalists deploy anti-Mongol ideology to present Russia as having a strictly western identity, one that is not “backwards” in the eyes of the rest of Europe. By examining the same literature used by Traditionalists, neglected Russian literature, and Persian and Chinese accounts from the larger Mongol Empire, the thesis shows the Mongols shaped not only Russia, but the thirteenth-century world.
Ta[r]tar[us]: The Russian Construction of the Medieval Mongol Legacy

by
Crystal Ann Louramore-Kirsanova

A thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
North Carolina State University
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

History

Raleigh, North Carolina
2020

APPROVED BY:

_______________________________
Dr. Julie Mell
Committee Chair

_______________________________
Dr. Keith Luria

_______________________________
Dr. Xiaolin Duan
DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my loving husband, Oleksandr Kirsanov. Thank you for always believing in me. Я тебя люблю.
BIOGRAPHY

Crystal graduated from Chowan University in 2015 with a BS in History. She is currently living in Greenville, NC with her husband, Oleksandr, and the two most perfect Yorkies in the world, Harley and Jax (AKA Cutesy Girl and Mr. Boots/Fruits).
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This paper would not have been possible without the constant support from my advisor, Dr. Julie Mell. Dr. Mell’s support and encouragement motivated me to pursue a topic I was passionate about, despite the circumstances. I would also like to express my appreciation to my other two committee members, Dr. Keith Luria and Dr. Xiaolin Duan for their insightful comments. Of course, I must thank my family for their endless love and support. Mama and Dad, thank you for the countless times you’ve written mental thesis notes down for me during our calls as I was driving to and from NC State. And finally, my long-suffering husband. Thank you for always supporting me, motivating me, and encouraging me. Also, thank you for being my personal Russian teacher. I know it was rough correcting my translations.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction..................................................................................................................1
Interpretation of the Mongol Impact...........................................................................2
Traditionalist Historians.............................................................................................5
Eurasianist Historians .................................................................................................7
Argument ....................................................................................................................13

Chapter 1: The “Tatar Yoke”.......................................................................................16

Chapter 2: Anti-Mongol Literature .............................................................................21
Tale of the Destruction of Riazan by Batu.................................................................25
Sermon of the Merciless Heathens.............................................................................29
Tale of Peter, Prince from the Horde ......................................................................30
Dunai...........................................................................................................................32
Mongol Impact in Russia...........................................................................................39

Chapter 3: The Russian Identity Crisis.......................................................................41
Normanist versus Anti-Normanist Theory...............................................................42
The Identity Crisis.....................................................................................................47

Chapter 4: A Thirteenth-Century World System.......................................................50
The Mongol Khans in China.....................................................................................50
Mongol Impact in China...........................................................................................53
The Mongol Khans in Persia (Modern-Day Iran)......................................................56
Mongol Impact in Persia (Modern-Day Iran).............................................................57
The Mongol Empire as a Thirteenth-Century World System....................................58

Conclusion ...................................................................................................................62

Bibliography...............................................................................................................65
INTRODUCTION

When the Mongols first appeared in Russia in 1223, a Kievan chronicler wrote, “No one knew who they were, or where they came from, or what their language was, or what tribe they belonged to, or what their religion is. Some say they are Tatars, and others call them Taurmeny, and others, Pechenegs.”¹ All they heard about these peoples from the Far East is that they were at war with the Polovtsy, Russia’s eastern neighbors.² When Mongol envoys arrived from the steppe about concerns against the Polovtsy, the nomadic steppe peoples known as the Cumans or Kipchaks, the Russians executed the ambassadors assuming they were similar to the steppe peoples they previously encountered. They were wrong. Little did the Russians know, they had declared war against Genghis Khan whose brute force would exceed anything the Russians had ever encountered.³ Fourteen years later, the Mongols returned as foreign conquerors. The Russians suffered defeat and found themselves dominated by the Golden Horde.

Medieval Russian epics, chronicles, and tales describe the Mongol invasion, and Russian scholars from the early modern to modern period have used the literature to depict the Mongols. The Traditionalist view of the Golden Horde identifies the Asian people as barbaric, and their rule as a dark age. While scholars traditionally have agreed that the Mongol invasion was disastrous compared to the civil wars of the earlier Russian princes, recently scholars have questioned whether Mongol rule was as dark an age as previously claimed. This thesis examines literary works from the Mongol period that demonstrate that the Mongols did, in fact, make a

positive contribution to Russia’s culture. Under the rule of the Mongols, the Russians adopted Mongol features of administration and economics and maintained their link with Europe through the Mongols religious toleration of Christianity and their protection of the Russian Orthodox Church. The Mongol conquest guided the course of development that Russia would accept culturally and politically in the years following the fall of the Golden Horde.

**Interpretations of the Mongol Impact**

Mongol rule over Russia is considered to have lasted from 1240 to 1480, yet there is no consensus among Russian scholars regarding the impact of the Mongols in Russian history. Many Russian historians neglect the two-hundred-year Mongol reign. According to Michael Cherniavsky, “There seems to have prevailed a vague desire to get rid of, to bypass, the whole question as quickly as possible.”

Russian historians agree that the Mongol invasions were catastrophic and widespread compared to the semi-feudal wars between earlier Russian princes; but it was not until after the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 that two contrasting views emerged among Russian historians who debated Mongol impact. These two groups are termed the Traditionalists and Eurasianists. While the scholars are predominately Russian, the Mongol debate includes international scholars, such as the American historian, Charles Halperin.

The Traditionalists consist of Soviet scholars who hold a prejudice against Asiatic groups due to the constant warfare during the Imperial period with the Ottoman Turks, the Japanese, and Central Asian Muslims. In the eighteenth century, when Russia sought to redefine itself as a European empire, Russians aimed to create a clear cultural boundary to set themselves apart from the “Asiatic other.” If people were non-Christian, regardless of their origin, they were portrayed as “Tatars”, augmenting a “good and evil” dichotomy. Russians related “Tatar” to the

---

Greek word for hell *Tartarus* by intentionally misspelling it with an extra “r.”\(^5\) Chauvinist ideology influenced Russian historiographies from the eighteenth to the twentieth century due to westernization, colonialism, and Russian policies towards minorities.\(^6\)

Eurasianists, on the other hand, acknowledged the destruction caused by the Mongols, but stressed the positive contributions of the Golden Horde. They consisted of émigrés who fled from Soviet Russia and had an ideology rooted in the feeling that Russia was betrayed by the West in 1917–1921. The majority of Eurasianists were part of the aristocracy who believed that Russia collapsed as a European power because the Western powers failed to defeat the Bolsheviks during the Revolution and Russian civil war.\(^7\) Eurasianism started in Bulgaria in July 1921 with the publication of *Exodus to the East: Forebodings and Events: An Affirmation of the Eurasians* by four Russian émigré scholars: Prince Nikolai Trubetskoi, a famous linguist and philosopher, Petr Savitskii, an economic geographer and geopolitician, Father Georgii Florovskii, a theologian and historian, and Petr Suvchinskii, a musicologist and art critic. *Exodus to the East* reassessed Russia’s national identity as one that is not strictly Western European, but Eurasian (Eastern Europe and Asia).\(^8\) These four scholars argued that Russia had no reason to imitate the West, because it did not belong to Western European culture. Rather, Russia needed to embrace Eastern European and Asian culture because Russian culture would be incomprehensible without the cultures of these people they had encountered throughout history.\(^9\)

---


\(^7\) Figes, *Natasha’s Dance*, 423.


The Eurasianist view acknowledged the destruction caused by the Mongols, but stressed the positive contributions of the Golden Horde. Eurasianists believed the Mongol Empire was a turning point in Russian history. They argued that the Mongols unified Eurasia politically, and furthermore the unification of Russia under Moscow was a direct consequence of the Mongol invasion. Under Mongol rule, Russia transitioned from rule by town assemblies to rule by a developing state. When the Mongols destroyed town assemblies, princes rose to power because their authority could no longer be questioned by the town assemblies.\textsuperscript{10} The rise of the princely influence and power created the way for the establishment of a strong centralized government during the period of Tsarist Russia.\textsuperscript{11} The Golden Horde delegated powers to the Russian Princes to collect taxes in their region and ensure that the Russian people provided civil and military service.\textsuperscript{12} Eurasianists believe that the Russian adoption of the Mongol’s concept of administration in its later periods, continued Genghis Khan’s legacy. Russia became the heir and successor to Genghis Khan’s administration.

Eurasianists further argued that the Mongols protected Russia from the corruption of Latin Europe by isolating Russia from the West. Unlike the West, Russia did not experience the Reformation. The Russian Orthodox Church remained unified, and its unification throughout the Russian lands was the most vividly embodied theme in medieval Russian literature during the thirteenth century. The Mongols were absentee rulers and tolerant of the different religions. Therefore, when they embraced Islam in 1257 to strengthen their rule over the majority Muslim

\textsuperscript{11} Halperin, “George Vernadsky, Eurasianism, the Mongols, and Russia,” 482.
\textsuperscript{12} Halperin, *Russia and the Golden Horde*, 108.
population within the larger Mongol Empire, the Mongols did not force Russia to convert.\footnote{Ravil Bukharaev, *Islam in Russia: The Four Seasons* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), 145; Aside from the khanate of the Yuan Dynasty, which remained strictly Buddhist, the Ilkhanate (present-day Iran, Azerbaijan, and Turkey) and the Chagatai Khanate (present-day Mongolia) population were predominately Muslim.}

Eurasianists noted the devastating results of the Mongol invasion in the beginning, but argued that Russians peacefully coexisted with the Mongols. For, despite the destruction caused, the Mongols contributed positive features to the development of Russia, including strength, faith, and religiosity.\footnote{Figes, *Natasha’s Dance*, 423.}

**Traditionalist Historians**

Dmitry Likhachev, the leading cultural historian in the mid-twentieth century, believed that the Asiatic influence in Russia was weak, and Russians received extraordinarily little benefit from Asians.\footnote{Dmitry Likhachev, *The Poetics of Early Russian Literature*, trans., Christopher Arden-Close (New York: Lexington Books, 2014), 23.}

Likhachev’s *The Poetics of Early Russian Literature*, first published in 1967, examines the complexity of early Russian literary genres. Likhachev did not solely focus on the Mongols in this work, but included a section dedicated to Mongol influence, or rather lack of, in his introduction. According to Likhachev, “among all European literatures early Russian literature has the smallest number of connections with the East […] and] this is undoubtedly connected with the special capacity of early Russia to resist Asia.”\footnote{Likhachev, *The Poetics of Early Russian Literature*, 22.} He asks his readers to draw their attention to the fact there was no poturchentsy (converts to Islam) or pomaki (Russian Muslims) in Russia, and unlike other countries that have Russian literature preserved in Arabic script, there is no single eastern script translated into Russian. Furthermore, despite the existence of the Golden Horde in Russia for two and a half centuries, there were no cases of whole
settlements or regions that converted to Islam. Likhachev concludes by stating that it is “impossible to give a short answer” to a “very complicated question.” Yet he maintains that Asiatic influence in Russia was weak. This is Likhachev’s effort to link Russian culture to Europe. If the Mongols had had any impact on Russia, Russia would have had a Muslim population, as well as, eastern manuscripts translated into Russian. However, there were no traces of either, but an abundant amount of western literature and Russian Christians.

Likhachev’s traditionalist view of the Mongols is seen in his work *A History of Russian Literature: 11th–17th Centuries*, which was published in 1989. Divided into eight chapters, the book is arranged to demonstrate the development of Russian literature in chronological order, concentrating on the most significant genres, including chronicle writing, homiletic literature, epistles, and polemical writings. The tales of the Mongol invasion of Russia are treated as its own section, as Likhachev believes these tales do not fit into a particular genre.

Likhachev uses the *Tale of Destruction of Riazan by Batu* to demonstrate the destruction and barbarism of the Mongols. The *Tale of the Destruction of Riazan by Batu* describes the capture of the city of Riazan by the Mongols in 1237 and is divided into five parts: Batu Invades Russia; Batu Defeats Prince Yury; The Taking of Riazan; Eupaty the Fearless; and Prince Ingvar Buries the Dead. Likhachev uses the passage from “Batu Invades Russia,” to describes the Mongols:

> The godless Emperor Batu invaded the Russian land with a great multitude of his Tatar warriors […] and he sent his infidel envoys to the city of Riazan, to Great Prince Yury Ingvarevich, demanding tithes from everyone—from the princes and from all the ranks of people. […] The Great Prince Yury Ingvarevich decided to send his son, Fedor Yurevich, to Batu with many gifts and supplications that he not invade the land of Riazan. […] [Prince Fedor] pleaded with the emperor. The godless, false, merciless emperor accepted

the gifts and deceitfully promised not to launch a campaign against the principality of Riazan, but he bragged, and threatened to conquer all other Russian lands.20

By emphasizing this passage, Likhachev depicts the Mongols as deceitful. Batu Khan promised not to invade Russia, but went against his word and launched his campaign against Riazan regardless. Likhachev, and other traditionalist historians, use this passage to create a negative image of the Mongols by focusing on the adjectives used to describe them—godless, false, merciless. Likhachev believed the Mongols brought nothing but devastation to Russia and the Russians had no choice but to surrender. Despite their subjugation to the Mongols, he argued that the Russian faith remained intact and unaffected by the Mongols. According to Likhachev, the preservation of Orthodox Christianity allowed the Russians to hold onto their western identity.21 The Russians believed God sent the Mongols as a punishment for their sins, and rather than stray further away from God, the Russian people sought comfort in their faith and relied on the Russian Orthodox Church for guidance and support against the Mongols.22 Traditionalists praise Orthodoxy for keeping Russia “unified” during a period of “barbaric” eastern control.

**Eurasianist Historians**

Prince Nikolai Trubetzkoy wrote thirteen essays in which he intended to demonstrate that Russia’s national expression was not rooted in Western traditions, but rather a mixture of Slavic, Byzantine, and Mongol cultures. For this reason, the title of his longest essay, “The Legacy of Genghis Khan: A Perspective on Russian History not from the West but from the East,” gave its title to the compilation overall—*The Legacy of Genghis Khan and Other Essay on Russia’s Identity*, which was published in 1991, fifty-three years after his death.

---

22 Dustin Hosseini, *The Effects of the Mongol Empire on Russia* (The University of Texas at Arlington, 2005), 4.
His essay on “The Legacy of Genghis Khan,” identifies elements of Eastern traditions that need to be recovered and cherished as an aspect of Russian identity. Trubetzkoy begins his argument with geopolitics, stating that Russia could not trace its origins to Kievan Rus. According to Trubetzkoy, Kievan Rus was unable to develop as a state because essentially, the state was unable to defend itself. Rather, Russia developed as a state only after its domination under the Mongols and the Golden Horde. Under Genghis Khan, a belief system was put in effect. Genghis Khan divided people into two categories. The first category contained people who were “always conscious of their subservience to a transcendent being” and were motivated by dignity and honor.\(^{23}\) The second category contained those only concerned for their own safety and material well-being. Genghis Khan chose people from the first group as leaders, because they honored the hierarchical system, whereas, people from category two obeyed out of fear. Trubetzkoy noted that the Russians later adopted this behavioral system of leadership after their encounter with the Mongols.\(^{24}\)

Trubetzkoy noted that the Mongol domination over the Russians created a religious revival and the creation of folklore and tales around an acclaimed Russian hero who fought against the Mongols. As a result, the Russians created an identity distinct from the Mongols. Russian identity revolved around the themes of unity and religious faith, and then there was the Mongol identity that was the “Other.”

Trubetzkoy examined the linguistic influence of Mongols on Russians to identify the assimilated elements of Mongol culture into the Russian culture. He displayed how Mongol culture had become absorbed in Russian culture through words. For example, although the


\(^{24}\) Trubetzkoy, *The Legacy of Genghis Khan and Other Essays on Russia’s Identity*, 167.
Mongols were absentee rulers, they used Russian elite to collect taxes from the principalities. Trubetzkoy examines how Russians have adopted words related to these financial matters, such as *denga* (coin), *kazna* (treasury), and *tomozhnia* (customs), rather than words of Western origin.25

Russian émigré and historian George Vernadsky emphasized the importance of Eurasian nomadic cultures and their contribution towards the progress of Russia.26 He took into account the immediate impact and direct effects of Mongol rule, as well as, unintended contributions. Vernadsky evaluated the Mongol influence by examining the differences between Kievan and Muscovite Russia. He stressed the importance of the Mongol rule through the cultural and economic progress of Russia and rejected the traditionalists’ claim that Kievan Rus was the sole influence on modern Russia.27

By comparing the pre-Mongol and post-Mongol eras, Vernadsky argued that the Mongols changed the route of Russia’s politics. Kievan Rus, which pre-dated Mongol rule, had a diversified political life with a balance between monarchical, aristocratic, and democratic elements.28 In 1517, thirty-seven years after the collapse of the Golden Horde, Baron von Herberstein asserted that the Grand Prince’s authority over Russia surpassed any European monarch’s.29 This monarchical authority in post-Mongol Russia was a result of the Mongol rule, according to Vernadsky. Monarchical power was highly developed in the Mongol Empire and by destroying Russian town assemblies, the Mongols destroyed the democratic balance, a legacy of

28 Halperin, “George Vernadsky, Eurasianism, the Mongols, and Russia,” 486.
29 David MacKenzie and Michael Curran, *A History of Russia, the Soviet Union, and Beyond* (Belmont, CA, 1999), 68-72.
Kievan Rus. The power of the princes grew because there were no longer officials to keep the princes’ authority in check.\textsuperscript{30} When the Grand Prince of Moscow prevailed over the other princes, he became the sole authority with sovereignty over the Rus. According to Vernadsky, the rise of the princes’ influence and power established the strong centralized government during the period of Tsarist Russia.\textsuperscript{31}

Charles J. Halperin, an American medieval historian, followed Vernadsky’s approach by arguing that Mongol rule provided Russian society with the elements to expand through their administration of Russia and their tolerance of the Russian culture. Halperin believes previous scholarship on the Mongol rule, distorted by prejudices of Imperial Russia, has created a false impression of stagnation during this era and argues that there was a much more complicated relationship between the Mongol rule over the Russians.\textsuperscript{32} He does not deny that the Mongol invasion was destructive and calamitous but argues that the Mongol rule was mutually beneficial to both the Russians and the Mongols. In his work, \textit{Russia and the Golden Horde: The Mongol Impact on Medieval Russian History}, published in 1985, Halperin explores the impact that the Mongol rule had on Russia by focusing primarily on the Mongol impact from an ethno-religious standpoint. He examines Russia from the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries, when Russia was caught between two different realms, European Christendom and Mongol rule. Each chapter examines Mongol role in regard to the military, political, economic, religious, and cultural aspects of Russian society, and uses works from both Traditionalists and Eurasianists to decipher the relation between the Russians and Mongols. For example, when examining Mongol role in Russian politics, Halperin uses the sources within Traditionalist historiography that argue that

\textsuperscript{30} Halperin, “George Vernadsky, Eurasianism, the Mongols, and Russia,” 486.
\textsuperscript{31} Halperin, “George Vernadsky, Eurasianism, the Mongols, and Russia,” 482.
\textsuperscript{32} Halperin, \textit{Russia and the Golden Horde}, viii.
“the entire population of Kievan Rus had moved to the northeast, therefore, the Great Russians were the heirs of Kievan Rus.” Halperin then combats this theory by using Eurasianist historiography that argues that the “Mongols had ‘democratizing’ influence, since the elite migrated and what was left in the Kievan region were lordless, self-governing peasant communes.” Halperin also focuses on the relationship between the Mongols and the Russians by examining the works of Church figures and by reviewing and analyzing the same medieval Russian tales and sermons as the traditionalist historians, including the *Tale of the Destruction of Riazan by Batu*. Russian literature allowed historians to create the notion that the Mongols were “barbaric” and thus the reason why Russia was “backward” or “stagnant” during Mongol rule. Halperin outlines the literature and provides the traditionalist interpretation of the text, and then provides passages that demonstrate that there was a cultural and political correspondence between the Russians and the Mongols. He emphasizes that Russians did not have a concept of fiction in medieval Russia. The works of Old Russian literature were meant to be taken historically, and thus the primary audience of the literature, the elite and upper class, deemed the narratives credible. Halperin challenges the traditionalist view by complicating the methodological issues involved in using literature to study history. According to Halperin, “the problem with studying tales is determining what is true and what is fictitious.” Traditionalists did not draw the line between truth and fiction when looking for historical facts.

Halperin demonstrates the problem with the Traditionalist interpretation in his analysis of the *Tale of the Destruction of Riazan by Batu*. By focusing solely on the first part, “Batu Invades

---

Russia,” the Traditionalists portrayed the Mongol invasion as a misfortune for Russia and emphasized the barbaric nature of the Mongols. Halperin acknowledges that the passage Dmitry Likhachev used justifies the traditionalist view of the Mongols and their impact on Russia. Halperin even acknowledges how the Tale of the Destruction of Riazan by Batu aided the growing prejudice that the Mongols were entirely barbaric, resulting in Russia entering a dark age. However, Halperin demonstrates how the Traditionalists failed to recognize the internal problems of Russia by neglecting to use the tale in its entirety. Halperin examines a section in “Batu Invades Russia,” which portrays the betrayal of Riazan’s neighbor, Vladimir. The passage states,

As soon as Great Prince Yury Ingvarevich learned of the invasion by godless Batu, he sent his envoys to the city of Vladimir, the faithful and Great Prince George Vsevolodovich, asking that either he either send succor against the godless emperor or come personally with his army. However, the great prince neither came personally nor sent help, since he had decided to fight Batu himself.39

The Great Prince Yury Ingvarevich of Riazan sought assistance. But his neighbor whom he was at peace with sent nothing, for Prince George alone wanted the glory of defeating Batu. Halperin shows how this passage represents the ongoing theme of disunity between the Russian princes during the medieval era. The princes’ disagreements delayed Russia’s growth because of their ongoing power struggles. However, some historians chose to overlook a possible reason for Russia’s “stagnation” and solely focused on the “barbarism” of the Mongols. This prejudice promoted the assumption that there was an ongoing hostility between the Russians and the Mongols, which caused no progress to be made during the Mongol rule.

There is still an ongoing debate among Russian scholars about the nature of the Mongols and the degree of influence they had on Russian history during the Golden Horde. During the

Soviet Era, no importance was assigned to the Mongol period in Soviet historiography.\textsuperscript{40} An anti-Mongol sentiment was prevalent throughout twentieth-century Russia, and minority groups with a Mongol ethnic background, such as the Kalmyks and Buryats, fell victim to Stalin’s Russification policy. “Russification” was Stalin’s cultural assimilation policy to force non-Russian groups to “give up their culture and language in favor of the Russian one.”\textsuperscript{41} The purpose was to minimize “foreign” influence. The Mongol period was completely overlooked because any trace of Mongol influence meant Russia was tied to the East. Therefore, Traditionalists have interpreted medieval Russian literature to promote an anti-Mongol perspective. They have neglected to use the texts in their entirety and have abandoned literary works from a later period during the Mongol rule to negate any Mongol influence in Russian culture. Eurasianists, on the other hand, undertake to examine medieval Russian literature in full, acknowledging the negative consequences, but focusing on the contributions of the Mongols and the Golden Horde that advanced Russia.

By examining the Traditionalist and Eurasianist approaches concerning the impact of the Mongols, it is clear that Russian history is politically inflected. Scholars must re-examine the evidence in its entirety and reassess the historiography of the Mongol Era in Russia. Using particular passages from literary works may strengthen the Traditionalist view, but the literature examined in its entirety weakens the view that the Mongols were barbaric and the invasion caused a period of stagnation in Russia’s history. This thesis contributes to the Eurasianist scholarship by examining more thoroughly than has previously been done the Russian literature

produced during Mongol rule. The thesis traces the medieval construction of Russian and Mongol identities and demonstrates the modern Russian attempt to create a distinct identity from the Mongols. By using literature examined by both Traditionalists and Eurasianists, as well as, non-Russian literature and accounts concerning both the Russians and the Mongols, I aim to bring to light the significance and influence that the Mongols had on the development and rise of the Russia, its culture, and its people. I argue that the Traditionalists' attempt to suppress Mongol importance in shaping Russia is due to their inability to accept their multicultural identity. Traditionalists have had a strong-willed desire to create a strictly western identity.

In order to comprehend the Mongol reputation in Russian history, it is important to understand who the Mongols were and how they were able to conquer half of the thirteenth-century world. Chapter one begins by examining the Mongols during the thirteenth century under the rule of Genghis Khan, the “Tatar Yoke,” and the emergence of a medieval Russian identity under Mongol rule. Chapter two re-examines the thirteenth-century Russian literature that Traditionalists neglected to use in its entirety or disregarded all together. Traditionalists aimed to create a distinct identity from the Mongols, depicting the Mongols as the barbaric “other.” With this anti-Mongol sentiment, Traditionalists neglect any positive impact from the Mongols. This chapter concludes by examining Mongol influence in Russia. Chapter three focuses on modern Russia’s construction of its own identity and examines why Traditionalists accept its Viking influence but reject its Mongol one. This chapter examines both medieval Russian literature and the Normanist and anti-Normanist theories. The Normanist versus anti-Normanist debate argues the origin of Kievan Rus. Normanists argued that Kievan Rus is of Scandinavian origin whereas anti-Normanists argued that Kievan Rus was of Slavic origin. The importance of this debate relating to the Traditionalist and Eurasian theories is that the historians who argue for the
Traditional view are the same historians who argue for the anti-Normanist theory. This chapter demonstrates how Traditionalists, to shape Russian identity, cherry-picked which sources they deemed accurate. Finally, chapter four examines the larger Mongol Empire as a thirteenth-century world system. This chapter surveys how the medieval world viewed the Mongols and the Mongols' impact across Europe and Asia.
CHAPTER ONE: THE “TATAR YOKE”

The key to the Mongol Empire’s success, according to Charles Halperin, was its ability “to integrate feudal, clan tribal, bureaucratic and imperial social structures and political institutions … and formulate new laws to cover new situations.” Their system of conquering and maintaining lands resulted in the control of nearly all of Asia from the continental caravan routes from China to Persia. The Mongols were a Central Asian tribe that were quite ethnically diverse due to the expansion and reduction of their empire for hundreds of years. Similar to most nomadic tribes across Central Asia and the steppes, these tribes were believed to be Uralo-Altaic and Turkic, even containing members of the Caucasian race. Until around 1197 when Genghis Khan became leader, the Mongols lacked administrative structure. He united the Central Asian tribes known as the Mongols in 1206.

Genghis Khan established the Great Yasa, the system of customary Mongol laws. These laws embraced and respected the various religions of other peoples and having no preference in religious matters, respecting innocent, righteous, and wise people, and giving envoys diplomatic immunity. During the Golden Horde, the Great Yasa was applied to the conquered Russians.

Genghis Khan applied strict administrative and military organization to the Mongols and created one of the most efficient armies in the medieval world. When the Mongols conquered a city or region, they added to their number of soldiers. The success of the Mongol conquests was due to their military structure and tactics. Universal enlistment, harsh discipline, and

---

42 Halperin, Russia and the Golden Horde, 25.
43 Halperin, Russia and the Golden Horde, 25.
46 Vernadsky, The Mongols and Russia, 102-107.
47 Chaliand, Nomadic Empires, 61.
egalitarianism shaped the Mongol army so that their loyalty to both commander and cause was resolute. Another important factor for their success was their nomadic lifestyle and use of the Eurasian steppe. The steppe offered prompt movement of troops and supplies across the empire.

Genghis Khan believed that their deity, the Eternal Sky, granted him the will to establish the vast Mongol Empire. The Mongols were predestined to manifest order on earth and “in their opinion any ruler who had not submitted to them, whether or not he had ever heard of the Mongols, had the status of a rebel against the divinely ordained government of the world.”

The Mongols believed that they were of divine origin and had the authority to rule over others. Motivated by ideological demands, the Mongol army conquered the land stretching from China to the steppes of Hungary within thirty years.

Mongol tactics were brutal, but effective. The Mongols would send envoys into a city to demand its surrender. If the city surrendered, the Mongols allowed the city to maintain its ruling family and religion. The city would then pay a ten percent tribute of all its wealth and goods, but in return, it was under Mongol protection. If the city refused, the Mongols would retaliate with brute force. A city normally refused by killing the Mongol envoys. The murder of their envoys was considered an unforgivable crime as it went against the Great Yasa law of diplomatic immunity.

When Russia encountered the Mongols and killed its envoys in 1223, they fought a short battle on the River Kalka. After the battle, the Mongols “disappeared into the Central Asian steppes and deserts” and Russia assumed that was the last they would see of these peoples, which

---

49 Vernadsky, *The Mongols in Russia*, 98.
they associated with the name “Tatar.”52 Fourteen years later, the Mongols returned to conquer Russia from 1237–42. When the Mongols invaded, there was a lack of unity among the Russian principalities due to the ongoing rivalries between the Russian princes. Rather than help each other, the princes secured their own cities, which made it easier for the Mongols to conquer Russia one city at a time.53 Batu, the son of Genghis Khan, led the invasion of Russia and in 1237, sacked the eastern Russian principality of Riazan. The Mongols effectively used siege warfare against the city. A wall surrounded Riazan, and the Mongols built an additional barrier around the city wall to ensure the Russians could not easily maneuver and effectively face them in battle.54 Riazan was captured after five days, and the Mongols massacred the entire population. In the winter of 1237–38, the Mongols conquered the Suzdal territory, which held the seat of the grand prince in its capital of Vladimir. In 1240, Kiev was completely destroyed and fell to Batu, and from 1240–42 on, all the Russian cities came under Batu’s rule. An account from The Chronicle of Novgorod describes how the city of Torzhok came under Mongol domination:

> And thence the lawless ones came and invested Torzhok on the festival of the first Sunday in Lent. They fenced it all round with a fence as they had taken other towns, and here the accursed ones fought with battering rams for two weeks. And the people in the town were exhausted and from Novgorod there was no help for them; but already every man began to be in perplexity and terror. And so the pagans took the town, and slew all from the male sex even to the female, all the priests and monks, and all stripped and reviled gave up their souls to the Lord in a bitter and wretched death.55

According to the account of Plano Carpini, a Franciscan monk who travelled through Kiev after the Mongol invasion, only two-hundred homes remained and an estimated 200,000

52 Zenkovsky, Medieval Russia’s Epics, Chronicles, and Tales, 194-96.
54 Weatherford, Genghis Khan and the Making of the Modern World, 147.
Russians were slaughtered. The Mongols spared the city of Novgorod. In 1241, Prince Alexander Nevsky was “well aware what disaster armed resistance would bring on them” and therefore, surrendered to the Mongols. Described by Traditionalists as the “Tatar Yoke,” Mongol domination in Russia led to the establishment of the Qipchaq Khanate, or the Golden Horde, of the Mongol Empire.

Following the death of Genghis Khan, the Mongol Empire was divided between his eldest sons by his first wife. Batu Khan, who led the campaign against Russia, inherited the Golden Horde. The Mongols did not directly rule over Russia as they did in other parts of their empire. According to Halperin, the Mongols were absentee rulers in Russia because Russia contributed very little to the Mongol Empire. It was far from the Asian trade routes, was not located on the steppes, was no threat to Mongol hegemony, and therefore, not worth Mongol manpower. With minimum effort, the Mongols extracted as much from Russia as possible through tribute; and because they were outnumbered by the Russian population, the Mongols allowed the Rurikid princes to rule over their principalities.

The lack of Mongol rule over Russia played a factor in creating medieval Russian identity. The absentee rule gave the Russians the impression that they were unique and their Russian spirit and unity kept the Mongols away. They did not realize that Russia was an inessential asset to the Mongol Empire. Batu Khan knew the danger of a unified Russia and therefore purposely intensified the principalities’ rivalries by granting more sovereignty to the

---

Russian princes. Initially, the Mongols sent tax-collectors to gather tribute from each town, but Batu Khan granted a Russian prince the title of “Grand Prince” to be in charge of the collection and deliverance of taxes to the Mongol capital, Sarai. The princes competed for this title which resulted in the disunity of Russia. The constant rivalry between the principalities maintained Russian instability and a secure Mongol rule.

It is undeniable that the aftermath of the Mongol invasion of Russia was catastrophic, however, the Russians recovered from the devastation of the Mongols relatively quickly. The Russian Orthodox Church promoted an image of the Russian people as resilient, and this identity allowed them to endure and survive Mongol domination. Termed, the “Russian Soul,” the Russian people were unified under one commonality: their faith. According to Vernadsky, “the spirit of the people was never broken” under Mongol rule. The Russians did not identify with their godless, barbaric conquerors and instead created a unique identity distinguished from that of the Mongols.

In Traditionalist historiography, there is a general consensus that the “Tatar Yoke” was responsible for Russia’s “backwardness” compared to Western Europe. The Mongols are blamed for isolating Russia from Europe, which resulted in halting the progress of Russian society and culture. Traditionalists turn to the Russian chroniclers which describe the Mongols as barbaric, ungodly, and destructive, to exemplify the characteristics of the “Tatar Yoke.” Chapter two examines this literature and the Traditionalists' claim that Mongol rule brought detrimental backwardness to Russian progress.

64 Vernadsky, *The Mongols and Russia*, v.
CHAPTER TWO: ANTI-MONGOL LITERATURE

The literature of medieval Russia bears testimony to Russian life. Religion was a key factor in medieval Russian literature as it was the churchmen who wrote the literature during Mongol rule. This literature depicts the Mongols as ungodly and destructive to the Christian faith, and it emphasizes the Russians as antithetical to their barbaric conquerors. The target audience for this literature was the Russian elite, because it was this portion of the population who were literate and involved with the Mongols.\(^{66}\) The Russian lower class paid taxes and provided their civil and military service, but were governed by the Russian princes and never encountered the Mongols face-to-face.\(^ {67}\) Russia’s conversion to Orthodox Christianity played a crucial role in the creation of the traditionalist view of the Mongols. As mentioned briefly at the end of chapter one, Orthodox Christianity unified the Russians under their “Russian Soul” and their identity revolved around the Christian faith compared to their ungodly, pagan conquerors. In 988, Prince Vladimir I accepted Orthodox Christianity and established Kievan Rus as a Christian state.\(^ {68}\)

Before converting to Orthodox Christianity, Vladimir quite elaborately surveyed several religions. According to the Russian primary chronicle, the *Laurentian Text*, representatives from other states traveled to Kiev with the desire to convert the prince to their respective faith. In 986, the Bulgars of “Mohammedan” faith visited Vladimir stating that,

> Mahomet instructed them to practice circumcision, to eat no pork, to drink no wine, and, after death, promised them complete fulfillment of their carnal desires. ‘Mahomet,’ they asserted, ‘will give each man seventy fair women. [Vladimir] may choose one fair one, and upon that woman will Mahomet confer the charms of them all, and she shall be his wife. Mahomet promises that one may then satisfy every desire, but whoever is poor in

this world will be no different in the next.”

Vladimir listened to the Bulgars and was intrigued by the women, indulgence, and pleasure of the faith, but ultimately found Islam undesirable because of its prohibition against alcohol and pork, stating, “drinking is the joy of all Rus. We cannot exist without that pleasure.” In the same year, the emissaries of the Pope, the Jewish Khazars, and a Greek scholar visited Vladimir. The Germans explained their teaching as “fasting according to one’s strength. But whatever one eats or drinks is all to the glory of God, as Paul has said.” Vladimir dismissed Catholicism because he believed the fathers of Kievan Rus accepted no such principle.

When the Jewish Khazars arrived, Vladimir inquired what their religion was, and the Khazars answered that its tenets “included circumcision, not eating pork or hare, and observing the Sabbath.” Vladimir asked where their native land was, the Khazars answered Jerusalem, but stated that “God was angry at our forefathers, and scattered us among the gentiles on account of our sins. [Jerusalem] was then given to the Christians.” Vladimir rejected Judaism because he believed it was evident that God had abandoned the Jewish people when they lost Jerusalem. He questioned the Khazars, asking, “How can you hope to teach others while you yourselves are cast out and scattered abroad by the hand of God? If God loved you and your faith, you would not be thus dispersed in foreign lands. Do you expect us to accept that fate also?”

The Greek scholar told Vladimir the story of why God descended to earth, starting with Genesis and ending with the Acts of the Apostles. As the scholar spoke, he displayed a canvas to

---

70 Samuel Hazzard Cross, *The Russian Primary Chronicle*, 97.
71 Samuel Hazzard Cross, *The Russian Primary Chronicle*, 97.
72 Samuel Hazzard Cross, *The Russian Primary Chronicle*, 97.
73 Samuel Hazzard Cross, *The Russian Primary Chronicle*, 97.
74 Samuel Hazzard Cross, *The Russian Primary Chronicle*, 97.
Vladimir that depicted the Judgement Day of the Lord. He showed him, on the right, the righteous and their happiness in Paradise, and on the left, the agony of the sinners. Vladimir replied, “Happy are they upon the right, but woe to those upon the left!,” in which the scholar replied, “If you desire to take your place upon the right with the just, then accept baptism!” Vladimir considered the scholar’s advice and told the scholar to wait a little longer because he wished to examine all the faiths. Vladimir then “gave the scholar many gifts, and dismissed him with great honor.”

In 987, Vladimir summoned his boyars and Kiev’s elders to get their opinion on the subject. They agreed to send servants to examine the ritual and worship of God from each faith. Vladimir’s envoys examined the Bulgars, the Germans, and the Greeks. When they returned to Kiev, they reported to Vladimir, his boyars, and the elders,

When we journeyed among the Bulgars, we beheld how they worship in their temple, while they stand ungirt. The Bulgar bows, sits down, looks hither and thither like one possessed, and there is no happiness among them, but instead only sorrow and a dreadful stench. Their religion is not good. Then we went to the Germans, and saw them performing many ceremonies in their temples; but we held no glory there. Then we went to Greece, and the Greeks led us to the edifices where they worship their God, and we knew not whether we were in heaven or on earth. For on earth there is no such splendor or such beauty, and we are at a loss how to describe it. We only know that God dwells there among men, and their service is fairer than ceremonies of other nations.

The boyars then told Vladimir if the Greek faith were evil, his grandmother Olga, who is wiser than all men, would not have adopted the faith. Vladimir accepted Orthodox Christianity as his faith and in 988, was baptized in Kherson (present-day Hersones/Chersones, Crimea, Ukraine/Russia). Vladimir was baptized in Kherson when he led a campaign there and captured

---

75 Samuel Hazzard Cross, *The Russian Primary Chronicle*, 110.
76 Samuel Hazzard Cross, *The Russian Primary Chronicle*, 110.
77 Samuel Hazzard Cross, *The Russian Primary Chronicle*, 110.
78 Samuel Hazzard Cross, *The Russian Primary Chronicle*, 111.
79 Samuel Hazzard Cross, *The Russian Primary Chronicle*, 111.
the city. He heard the emperor, Basil II, had an unwedded sister, Anna, and insisted Basil II give Anna to him as his wife. Basil II required Vladimir be baptized before he allowed the marriage of his sister to Vladimir. His marriage to Anna directly followed after his baptism. Upon his return to Kiev, accompanied by his wife and Byzantine Christian clergy, Vladimir destroyed the pagan idols that overlooked the city, conducted a mass baptism of the Kievan population in the Dnieper River, and began the process of building a church dedicated to the Holy Virgin.

Russia was united after becoming an Orthodox Christian nation in the tenth century. Religion influenced every area of Russian life and molded Russian society. When the Mongols initially invaded Russia, many churches were destroyed. The destruction caused by the Mongols led to the formation of a distinct Russian identity by “othering” their destructive, pagan conquerors. Additionally, the Mongols converted to Islam in 1257 because the Mongol elite wanted to strengthen their rule over the majority Muslim population (aside from the khanate of the Yuan Dynasty, which remained strictly Buddhist, the Ilkhanate and the Chagatai population were predominately Muslim). The Russian image of the Mongols shifted from “pagans” to “cruel and evil infidels” as the Russians believed the Mongols were one of “the unclean people shut in the mountain by Alexander of Macedon [who shall come forth] at the end of the world.”

The Mongol invasion meant danger for the Russian lands and medieval Russian literature depicts the Mongols as ungodly and destructive to the Christian faith. The literature emphasizes the

---

82 Ravil Bukharaev, *Islam in Russia*, 145.
Russians as antithetical to their barbaric conquerors and the texts written by the churchmen directly contributed to the anti-Mongol sentiment in traditionalist historiography.

This chapter builds on Charles Halperin’s argument made in his analysis of "Batu Invades Russia" that traditionalists neglect to use literature in its entirety. But “Batu Invades Russia” is not the only section traditionalists fail to use in its entirety. They neglect other sections in *Tale of the Destruction of Riazan by Batu*, as well as thirteenth- and fourteenth-century literature to create the barbaric image of the Mongols. The additional pieces of literature examined in this chapter further weaken the Traditionalist view that the Mongols were entirely barbaric and had no impact on Russia’s history and culture. They provide direct evidence of Mongol tolerance and positive influence.

*Tale of the Destruction of Riazan by Batu*

The *Tale of the Destruction of Riazan by Batu* was originally a part of a series of works dedicated to Saint Nikholas of Zarazsk, and scholars believe it to be a part of a collection written and revised by the clergy of the Church of Saint Nikholas. The *Destruction of Riazan by Batu* survives in several sixteenth- and seventeenth-century redactions. Soviet scholars analyzing the dating of the various editions have suggested that the author wrote the tale many years after the sack of Riazan occurred, due to the historical inaccuracies. For, the author used a list with the names of the princes of Riazan, but did not acknowledge the dates of their deaths. Prince Vsevolod is mentioned in the tale as a heroic defender of Riazan, but he died before the battle in 1208.

Riazan was a wealthy border principality located on the Oka River, approximately 240 km (150 miles) southeast of Moscow. When the events described in the tale took place.

---

84 Dmitry Likhachev, *History of Russian Literature, 11th-17th centuries*, 198, 246.
Inhabitants were actively involved in trade between the Northern Caucasus and peoples of the Black Sea coast. Relations with its neighbors, Chernigov and Vladimir, were peaceful by the time of the Mongol invasion. According to this tale and other various chronicles, the Mongols attacked Riazan in 1237.

*The Tale of the Destruction of Riazan by Batu* describes the capture of the city of Riazan by the Mongols, which it divides into five parts: Batu Invades Russia; Batu Defeats Prince Yury; The Taking of Riazan; Eupaty the Fearless; and Prince Ingvar Buries the Dead. The tale describes Batu as an emperor, but he was a commander of the Mongolian armies that operated in Europe. The *Tale* opens as if a chronicle entry: “Within twelve years after bringing the miraculous icon of Saint Nikholas from Kherson, the godless Emperor Batu invaded the Russian land with a great multitude of his Tatar warriors and set up camp on the river Voronezh in the vicinity of the principality of Riazan.” The Great Prince Yury Ingvarevich of Riazan sent his son Fedor Yurevich to Batu with gifts of supplication. Batu accepted the gifts but gave a false promise not to invade Riazan. The Great Prince Yury Ingvarevich then prepares for battle along the border of Riazan. The tale describes the Russians as fighting bravely and fiercely, but, being outnumbered, they lose the battle. Batu and his army storm the city and kill all of its inhabitants. Eupaty Kolovrat organizes a small group of soldiers and, though outnumbered, fights a battle against Batu’s army. Eupaty Kolovrat is killed but manages to weaken the Mongol army. Prince Ingvar Engrarevich, the brother of the Great Prince Yury Ingvarevich of Riazan, returns from Chernigov after visiting family to witness the destruction of Riazan. He searches through the bodies to find all his relatives dead. Prince Ingvar Engrarevich honors the dead by rebuilding and restoring Riazan. The tale ends with Prince Ingvar Engrarevich taking the throne.

---

Halperin critiques the Traditionalists for failing to use “Batu Invades Russia” in its entirety. However, Traditionalists also neglected other passages from the sections “Batu Defeats Prince Yury” and “Eupaty the Fearless” that moderate the image that the Mongols were entirely barbaric and cruel. “Batu Defeats Prince Yury” demonstrates that Batu possessed consideration for Prince Oleg’s life: “when Emperor Batu saw Prince Oleg Ingvarevich, the most handsome and bravest of the Riazan princes, dying from his grievous wounds, he wanted to heal his wounds and win him over to his faith. But Prince Oleg began to reprimand Batu, and called him godless and an enemy of Christendom.” This resulted in Prince Oleg’s death. Although Prince Oleg died by the hands of Batu Khan, this passage undermines the Traditionalist argument that the Mongols were entirely barbaric and slaughtered anyone they came in contact with. Batu Khan was willing to spare Prince Oleg’s life, and it was not until Prince Oleg chastised him that Batu Khan “ordered [him] to be cut to pieces.”

Another passage that weakens the Traditionalist view is “Eupaty the Fearless.” In “Eupaty the Fearless,” the Russian noble, Eupaty Kolovrat, assembled his entourage and organized a violent attack on Batu. The Mongols captured Eupaty’s men and according to the text, only after great difficulty, killed Eupaty:

Eupaty was encircled by Tatar troops because they wished to take him alive … but Eupaty was a giant … and once more began to cut down the Tatar troops. And he killed many of Batu’s best knights … the Tatars became afraid … and then they brought up catapults and began showering rocks upon him. And they finally killed Eupaty Kolvorat.

They brought his body to Batu, and despite the destruction Eupaty had caused to the Mongol army, Batu states, “O Eupaty Kolovrot, you have honored us with your courage, and

---

90 Zenkovsky, *Medieval Russia’s Epics, Chronicles, and Tales*, 203.
you, with your small army, have killed many knights of my powerful horde and have defeated many of my regiments. If such a knight would serve with me, I would keep him very close to my heart.”

Batu then released Eupaty’s men whom he had captured, ordered that no harm should come to them, and allowed Eupaty’s men to carry Eupaty’s dead body away in honor. This portion of the tale reveals the medieval construction of both Russian and Mongol identity. Eupaty embodies the “Russian Soul” of resilience through his great strength against the Mongols. On the other hand, the Mongols are acknowledged as possessing noble qualities by honoring Eupaty for his bravery and allowing his men to leave with his body unharmed. Both “Batu Defeats Prince Yury” and “Eupaty the Fearless” from the Tale of the Destruction of Riazan by Batu reveal why Traditionalists intentionally refused to use a work in its entirety.

While the tale does describe the destruction caused by the Mongols, it also recognizes that the Mongols were not entirely barbaric as considered by Traditionalists.

Traditionalists examined other pieces of literature to construct the Mongol identity. Aside from tales, such as the Destruction of Riazan, Traditionalists turned to thirteenth-century sermons that described the destructive manner of the Mongols. The Sermon of the Merciless Heathens is one of five sermons written by the Bishop of Vladimir, Serapion. The central theme of his sermons was the destruction caused by the Mongol invasion. Serapion believed the Mongol invasion was a divine punishment on Russia for its people’s sins. Serapion wrote four of his five sermons in 1274 to 1275, but the Sermon on the Merciless Heathens was written shortly after Batu's sack of Kiev in 1240.

---

91 Zenkovsky, Medieval Russia’s Epics, Chronicles, and Tales, 204.
Sermon on the Merciless Heathens

The Sermon on the Merciless Heathens begins by Serapion asking his brethren to contemplate the Lord’s love for men, “How does he try to bring us to himself? What commandments does he place upon us? What words does he chastise us with?” Serapion believed that regardless of all the signs God had offered, “we [the Russian people] do not turn to him.” The Russian faith, which was supposed to be the inseparable link between the Russian identity and Russian Orthodox Church, was fragmented because its people failed to turn to God. Serapion continues by stating that God has witnessed Russians' defiance to their faith: “He has seen our trespasses multiply. He has seen us forsake his commandments. Many admonitions have we heard from him. Many fears has he inspired in us. Many of his servants has he enlightened, yet what man has become the better for all this?” The abandonment of the Russian faith brought the Mongols upon Russia. Serapion believed the Mongol invasion was the wrath of God. He described the Mongols as, “the merciless heathens, violent heathens, people having mercy neither for the young, for the weak and aged, nor the infants.” The sermon describes the destruction caused by the Mongols and ends by Serapion informing the Russian people that they will persevere if they turn back to their faith and accept God.

The Sermon on the Merciless Heathens fits the Traditionalist argument of the Mongols. This passage describing the damage inflicted supports the preconception that the Mongols were detrimental to Russia rather than progressive:

The sacred churches were destroyed. The sacred vessels were defiled. The saints were trodden upon. The prelates were victims of the sword. The bodies of holy monks became

---

93 Zenkovsky, Medieval Russia’s Epics, Chronicles, and Tales, 243.
94 Zenkovsky, Medieval Russia’s Epics, Chronicles, and Tales, 243.
95 Zenkovsky, Medieval Russia’s Epics, Chronicles, and Tales, 243.
96 Zenkovsky, Medieval Russia’s Epics, Chronicles, and Tales, 244.
97 Zenkovsky, Medieval Russia’s Epics, Chronicles, and Tales, 234-44.
food for birds. The blood of our priests and brothers, as if it were water, soaked into the earth. The strength of our princes and voevodas has disappeared [...] Many of our brothers and our children have been led into captivity. Weeds overgrow our villages [...] Our wealth was taken from us by heathens, inheriting the fruits of our labors. Our land has become property of foreigners. Our land taken from us, we became objects of the jibes of those who live beyond our lands.98

What is important to note is that Serapion wrote this sermon shortly after the fall of Kiev. It is undeniable that the Mongol invasion brought devastation and massacre upon Russia, however, Traditionalists use the destruction caused during the invasion to portray the entirety of Mongol rule in Russia. A literary source Traditionalists neglect is the Tale of the Peter, Prince from the Horde, written in 1253 – thirteen years after Batu conquered Kiev.

Tale of the Peter, Prince from the Horde

This tale recounts the conversion of a Mongol prince to Christianity, who settled in Rostov and built a church there. The holy bishop of Rostov, Cyril, visited the Horde to show deference to Berke Khan, the grandson of Genghis Khan, “while cherishing the church of the Holy Virgin.”99 Cyril told Berke Khan about Saint Leontius, and “how he baptized the city of Rostov and brought in the Orthodox people, and how he was honored for it by the Russian princes […] And when he heard this from the bishop, Berke Khan fell in love with him, [meaning, expressed his love for him] and showed him honor, and gave him all that he had asked for, and let him go.”100 When Berke Khan’s son fell ill, Berke Khan believed no doctor could cure his son, so he called on Cyril to heal his son. Cyril cured Berke Khan’s son with water he had blessed before traveling to the Horde. Rejoicing because of the news, Berke Khan ordered the Horde to pay an annual tribute to the Rostov Church of the Holy Virgin.

98 Zenkovsky, Medieval Russia’s Epics, Chronicles, and Tales, 244.
Berke Khan’s nephew, who was always present with Berke Khan, was in awe of the teachings of Cyril. After pondering how the khans put faith in the sun, months, stars, and fire, Berke Khan’s nephew decided “to leave with His Holiness to see the temple of the Russian land and the miracles performed by saints [because as he stated], ‘In our lands there are no miracles from the sun, and from the month, and from the stars, and from the fire.’”101 His father, Berke Khan's brother, had already died at the time, and his mother, dejected by his thoughts, showed him all the riches of his father that he had kept for him. Despite the great wealth, the boy thought only of God, so “he gave everything to the poor Tatars and handed a lot of gold to the [Rostov] church.”102

Cyril baptized the boy and gave him the name, Peter. Under Cyril, Peter spent his days learning the words of the Lord. One day, Peter went to Lake Rostov. After praying, he fell asleep by the lake and “late that evening, two men approached him, shining like the sun, woke him up saying, ‘My friend Peter, your prayer has been heard and your alms are pleasing God. Do not be afraid, we are both sent to you by God […] Go to the prince, and say to him, ‘Peter and Paul, Christ's apostles, sent me to you to put a church in the place where I fell asleep near the lake.’”103 When Peter awoke, he did just as Peter and Paul commanded. He met with the prince and said, “I have loved your faith, and, having left the faith of my father, came to you. The will of the Lord

Peter built the church on Rostov Lake and consecrated it according to the commandments of the holy apostles.

The Tale of the Venerable Peter, Prince from the Horde weakens the argument that the Mongol rule was disruptive to Russia’s progression. Although churches were destroyed during the initial invasion, due to the prosperity of the Mongol trade routes, many were rebuilt. Churches and clerics had immense tax privileges and were exempted from taxation, allowing them to quickly recover from the invasion and prosper like never before.105 Clerics were exempt from the Mongol dual system of civil and military service and the Russian Orthodox Church was under direct Mongol protection. The Mongols’ religious tolerance allowed the Russian Orthodox Church to increase its wealth and influence, become less dependent on the Russian princes and to become extremely influential in politics and society owing to its wealth.106 The Traditionalist image of the detrimental and oppressive Tatar Yoke seems to be fictitious.

Anti-Mongol sentiment remained in Russian literature well into the nineteenth century. The Mongols continued to be viewed as an evil, lesser being, and held responsible for Russia’s “backwardness.” The term, “Tatar Yoke,” was not present in Russian vocabulary until the 1660s.107 Examples of anti-Mongol literature include Dunai and Krupenichka.

**Dunai**

Dunai is the main figure in four Russian songs: “Dunai and Nastasia,” “Dunai’s Fight with Dobrynya,” “Dunai the Matchmaker,” and “The Death of Dunai and Nastasia.” The last two songs form a single story simply called “Dunai,” which is one of the most popular Russian

---

105 Halperin, Russia and the Golden Horde, 113.
106 Hosseini, The Effects of the Mongol Empire on Russia, 4-5.
107 Ostrowski, Muscovy and the Mongols, 244.
bylinas (epic poems). Written down in the seventeenth century, the texts of Dunai “often contain allusions to the other two songs […] to motivate the epic’s implied ‘prehistory.’”

*Dunai* has two common themes seen in Russian epics: bride taking and matchmaking. Bride taking is described as a heroic undertaking. The groom has to overcome dangerous obstacles. The matchmaker is usually a magical helper who helps the groom overcome the trials he faces. The bride is presented as a warrior maiden or sorceress, and on their wedding night, the groom destroys the bride’s “power” by bringing her under control. In *Dunai*, Dunai is the groom and Nastasia is the bride. Nastasia is not a sorceress, but she is a princess. In this poem, Nastasia also has the features of a Tatar, which according to James Bailey, “is an example of how traditional folklore element has been modified under the influence of historical events, in this instance the effects of the Tatar domination over Kievan Rus.” Apraxia, Nastasia’s younger sister, “forms a contrast to her sister and reflects the idealized portrait of a bride in medieval times.”

*Dunai* is about the voyage of Dunai to Lithuania to ask the king for the hand of his youngest daughter, Apraxia, on behalf of Prince Vladimir of Kiev. During a banquet held by Prince Vladimir, he told his men that he was in search of a wife, a worthy princess who was “tall in stature, […] shapely in figure, […] beautiful in face, […] [and] her step should be quick and her speech should be pleasant.” Dunai Ivanovich came from behind the oaken table and stated,

Prince Vladimir of capital Kiev! I know and I’m acquainted with a worthy princess for you. In that land, in brave Lithuania, his royal majesty has two grown daughters, both

---

daughters are ready for marriage. The older daughter is Nastasia the Princess, this
daughter is always roaming and looking for a fight, but the younger daughter always lives
at home, this is Apraxia the Princess. She’s tall in stature, she’s shapely in figure, and
she’s beautiful in face, her step is quick, and her speech is pleasant. For you, Prince,
she’ll be someone to live with and to be with, to consult with and to spend your life
with.\(^{114}\)

Prince Vladimir agreed to Dunai’s prospect and sent him to Lithuania to “arrange a
marriage in good faith.”\(^{115}\) Vladimir then told Dunai, “if they don’t give her to [him] honorably,
take her by force” as Vladimir wanted Apraxia as his wife.\(^{116}\) Dunai insisted his favorite
comrade, Dobrynya Nikitich, accompany him, and the two men went on their way to Lithuania.

When Dunai and Dobrynya arrived in Lithuania, Dunai told Dobrynya to stay in the
courtyard to tend to the steeds and only come if he needed assistance. When Dunai spoke the
with king, he was not met with news he wanted to hear. The king refused the marriage proposed
between Vladimir and Apraxia. The Lithuanian king was upset that Dunai had arranged a
marriage for his youngest daughter, but rejected his older one, Nastasia, and threw Dunai in the
dungeon. Ultimately, the Lithuanian king released Dunai and gave Apraxia’s hand in marriage to
Prince Vladimir because Dunai called on Dobrynya for help. In exchange for Apraxia, the
Lithuanian king insisted Dobrynya stop killing all his faithful servants in the royal courtyard.

On their way back to Kiev, “a Tatar was riding in pursuit, his good steed was sinking up
to its fetlocks in the muddy road, it was kicking stones off the road, it was hurling them two
arrow shots away.”\(^{117}\) Dobrynya rode off with Apraxia to Kiev and Dunai rode off “in pursuit of
this Tatar.”\(^{118}\) The Tatar turned out to be Princess Nastasia, who Dunai had known when he lived
in the Lithuanian palace for three years while serving in her father’s court. The two had

previously had a love affair and when Dunai realized the Tatar was Nastasia, he proposed they get married in Kiev. When they arrived Kiev, they went “to the church, to the cathedral church, [where] the younger sister was getting married, [and] the older sister came to the altar.”119 At their wedding feast, Dunai bragged that not only did he give "himself in marriage […] [he] presented a friend with a wife."120 Nastasia retorted that no one could match her in shooting. So in the midst of their wedding feast, Dunai challenged her to an arrow shooting competition. They rode to an open field to shoot where Nastasia “shot a tempered arrow and with the arrow she hit the edge of a knife, she cleaved the arrow into two halves, both halves came out equal, equal to the eye and even in weight.”121 When Dunai shot, he overshot his first time, undershot his second time, and missed his third time. Dunai was angry that Nastasia bested him and aimed a tempered arrow at her chest. Nastasia begged that he punish her in three other ways rather than shooting her with an arrow:

Inflict a first punishment on me: Take a silken whip, soak the whip in hot pitch, and beat me on my naked body. And inflict a second punishment on me: Take me by my woman’s hair, tie me to a saddle stirrup, and drive the steed through the open field. And inflict a third punishment on me: Lead me to a crossroads, and bury me up to my breasts in the damp earth, and beat me with sharp oaken stocks, and cover me with reddish yellow sand. Starve me and feed me with oats, but keep me exactly three months.122

Nastasia begged that Dunai punish her for three months because she was pregnant and wanted to give birth to her infant. Despite her plea, Dunai shot her in the chest, opened her up to take her heart and liver, when he saw there was an infant in her womb. Dunai, seeing the infant, committed suicide right next to Nastasia.

119 James Bailey, An Anthology of Russian Folk Epics, 197.
120 James Bailey, An Anthology of Russian Folk Epics, 198.
121 James Bailey, An Anthology of Russian Folk Epics, 198.
122 James Bailey, An Anthology of Russian Folk Epics, 199.
In this text, Nastasia fits the Traditionalist view of the Mongol identity. Compared to her sister Apraxia, who is pleasant and possesses all the qualities of femininity, Nastasia is arrogant, masculine, and always looking for a fight. She is blatantly described as a Tatar and Traditionalists focus on the passages that fit the primitive bias Russians had about the Mongols. When Dunai stopped the Tatar (not knowing that it was Nastasia) in its path and ordered the Tatar to speak, Nastasia is portrayed as barbarous and subordinate, attending to Dunai’s commands:

"Tatar, stop in the open field, Tatar, roar like a wild animal, Tatar, hiss like a snake!" The Tatar roared like a wild animal, the Tatar hiss like a snake, the dark forests collapsed into pieces, the stones were scatters in the open field, the grasses were withered in the open field, flowers were strewn on the ground; Dunai fell off his good steed.123

The passage describes the actions of a monster, which portrays the Traditionalist representation of the Mongols, inhuman. The image of the barbaric Mongol seems to dissipate due to one important factor addressed in this poem: Nastasia and Apraxia are both Tatars. Apraxia was desired by and married a Russian prince who was well aware of her background. Nastasia was the lover of Dunai and they marry. Similar to the marriage arrangements in Dunai, during the thirteenth century, intermarriage was a common form of contact between Russians and Mongols. The Russian aristocracy not only married Tatar women, but spent their “career among Mongols in the Steppe.”124 It is uncertain exactly how much cohabitation happened between the Tatars and Russian aristocracy. However, “some estimates have been very high, calculating 156 aristocratic families (twenty percent) were of Mongol or oriental origin” and families hold last names with Mongol descent—Baskakov, Yarlikov, and Yasak.125

---

Furthermore, although the previous passage from *Dunai* portrays Nastasia as bestial, the Russian language borrowed many words and phrases from Mongolian. According to Dustin Hosseini, “it is only natural that the Mongol Empire, after two-hundred years of dominance, would leave a multitude of significant linguistic and even socio-linguistic impacts on the people who inhabited the land of Rus.”¹²⁶ For example, the most notable is the phrase *davai* (давай – come on, let us go).¹²⁷

Another anti-Mongol tale that portrays the Mongols as primitive is *Krupenichka*. *Krupenichka* is a post-Mongol rule fairytale written by Russian and Soviet writer Nikolai Teleshov, which was first published in 1884. *Krupenichka* describes the story of a fair maiden stolen by the Tatars, who want to marry her to the Khan. In the tale, God saves the maiden as she was the “most closely approximate [to] the angelic life,” a virgin.¹²⁸ God transformed the maiden into a buckwheat seed and threw her into a field that had never been plowed or seeded. The maiden grew into a flowery, fragrant buckwheat and provided the Russian people with a bountiful harvest. While the tale portrays a Russian victory—the maiden’s escape from the Tatars, Soviet painter H. Vitsur, illustrates the barbarianism of the Mongols through the illustration of the tale and the “Tatar Kiss.”

---

¹²⁶ Hosseini, *The Effects of the Mongol Empire on Russia*, 9-10.
During the Mongol period, the Russian Orthodox Church enforced strict laws concerning sexual behavior in marriage. Nongenital contact as part of sexual intercourse was deemed sinful, and open-mouthed kissing was a sin and penance consisted of a dry fast of twelve days.\textsuperscript{129} Twentieth-century Russians termed open-mouthed kissing “Tatar,” which related back to the Mongols’ “backwards” behavior. According to Eve Levin, the term was created post-Mongol rule.\textsuperscript{130} Vitsur’s painting was published in the book, \textit{Tulilind} (Firebird), in 1951. The painting itself displays the traditionalist view of the Mongols. Vitsur depicted the Tatar kiss as primitive through the representation that a Mongol did not know how to properly kiss. In the painting, the Mongol is licking Krupenichka rather than actually kissing her.


\textsuperscript{130} Levin, \textit{Sex and Society in the World of the Orthodox Slavs}, 175.
Mongol Impact in Russia

As seen throughout this chapter, Traditionalists have used literary accounts from both Mongol and post-Mongol rule to undermine Mongol impact in Russia. Creating this barbaric Mongol identity, Traditionalists argue that the “Tatar Yoke” left Russia in a detrimental state, isolated from the rest of the world, that resulted in its lack of progress compared to the rest of Europe.

Contrary to Traditionalist belief, the “Tatar Yoke” played a positive and important role in Russian history. Not only did the Mongols influence aspects of Russian culture—religion, language, familial ties—but the Mongols were responsible for the rise of Moscow. According to Paul Silfen, the alliance between the Mongols and Russian principalities in terms of commerce, administration, and protection allowed Moscow to become the strongest and most influential principality in Russia during the fifteenth century. Since the Moscow princes were obedient to their Mongol overlords, in return, the Mongols protected Moscow by responding to any threat that came to the principality. This direct protection allowed Moscow to develop economically by utilizing the Mongol trade network. Russia’s fur trade flourished due to the trade routes set up throughout the entire Mongol Empire—from Western Europe to China. The trading network played an important role in the political evolution of the Russian principalities (Moscow, Kiev, and Novgorod) because the “principalities enhanced their political authority through manipulation of such factors as fur resources and trade routes: thus […] supremacy of Muscovy was based upon both political advantage and monopolization of the networks of the fur trade.”

Furthermore, the Russian princes utilized the Mongol dual system of civil and military

---

131 Silfen, The Influence of the Mongols on Russia, 37-40.
administration. This administration exercised direct power over enlistment for state service and taxation. The Russian military was divided into five large units. Rather than proceeding with a frontal assault, they would attack from multiple directions, preventing the enemy from withdrawing.\textsuperscript{133} Despite substantial Mongol influence, the “neglect of the period of Mongol domination has been the rule rather than the exception” in regard to Traditionalists, but why?\textsuperscript{134} Why is there an existing historiography that denies Mongol influence in its entirety? Chapter three attempts to answer this question.

\textsuperscript{134} Halperin, \textit{Russia and the Golden Horde}, vii.
CHAPTER THREE: THE RUSSIAN IDENTITY CRISIS

Throughout its history, Russia has had a struggling relationship with its geopolitical culture, which is territory and identity. Located between Europe and Asia, Russia controlled one-third of Asia, but identified as a European state. Russia strove to mirror Europe and acknowledging its Asian culture would have disrupted its western identity. The previous two chapters have examined the Traditionalist versus Eurasianists debate regarding Mongol influence during the rule of the Golden Horde. However, Traditionalist historians have also made use of a debate about an older historical period: the origin of Kievan Rus and the influences of its Viking rulers—Normanist Theory vs. anti-Normanist Theory. The origin of Kievan Rus gave rise to a hot debate because Kievan Rus was the first land that would later become the Russian Empire. In this debate, the same historians who are the Traditionalists are the anti-Normanists.

Similar to the Mongols, who are portrayed as barbaric in the Traditionalist/Eurasianist debate, this school of historians argue that the Vikings were also barbaric and not state building peoples, and therefore Kievan Rus does not have Scandinavian origins. Despite the debate of the origins of Kievan Rus, there is a consensus amongst both Normanists and anti-Normanists that the Vikings influenced Russian culture during the tenth and eleventh centuries. This is not the case with Traditionalists and Eurasianists as Traditionalists disregard any Mongol influence. The purpose of this chapter is two-fold: First, this chapter is intended to present how anti-Normanist historians reject the same literature they used to argue their Traditionalist view about the Mongols. Second, this chapter examines why Russian historians accept its Viking influence but reject its Mongol one.
The Vikings came to Russia in the ninth century in search of silver. Known as the
Varangians to early Slavs, the Vikings or Northmen, travelled along the Dvina, Volga, and
Dnieper rivers trading with Byzantium and the Arab world. According to the Russian Primary
Chronicle, the Slavs asked the Norman raiders to govern their land. The Russian Primary
Chronicle is the basic source of history of Kievan Rus. Initially compiled by the monks, Nestor
and Sylvestor in Kiev around 1113, the Primary Chronicle, is considered the earliest source of
Russian history. According to a passage recorded in the year 862, the Slavic tribes were in
continuous conflict with each other and thought that the Vikings would establish peace by
governing their lands:

The four tribes who had been forced to pay tribute to the Varangians—Chud, Slavs, Merya and Krivichi drove the Varangians back beyond the sea, refused to pay them
further tribute, and set out to govern them. But there was no law among them, and tribe
rose against tribe. Discord thus ensued among them, and they began to war one against
the other. They said to themselves, ‘let us seek princes who may rule over us, and judge
us according to custom. Thus they went overseas to the Varangians. These particular
Varangians were known as Rus, just as some are called Swedes, and others Normans and
Angles, and still other Gothlanders, for they were thus named. The Chud, the Slavs, the
Krivichi and the Ves then said to the Rus ‘our land is great and rich, but there is no order
in it. Come reign as princes, rule over us.’ Three brothers with their kinfolk were
selected. They brought with them all the Rus and migrated. The oldest, Riurik, located
himself in Novgorod … From these Varangians the Russian land received its name.

Based on this passage, it seems Kievan Rus obtained its name from the Viking tribe
called the Rus, and the Slavic peoples invited the Rus to govern them. The Normanist theory
examines the origin of Kievan Rus by drawing on the Russian Primary Chronicle. The first
proponents of the Normanist theory were eighteenth-century German historians Gotlib Bayer,

---

135 Konstantin Sheiko and Stephen Brown, History as Therapy: Alternative History and
136 Cross and Sherbowitz-Wetzor eds., Russian Primary Chronicle, 144-45.
Gerhard Friedrich Mueller, and August Ludwig Schlozer. They argued that Kievan Rus’ name is of Norman origin through the Varangians who arrived from Scandinavia in the ninth century.

Since the early eighteenth century, Normanist historians gathered evidence from “Byzantine, west European, Arab and Persian sources” to substantiate that the Rus mentioned in the *Primary Chronicle* were Scandinavian.\(^{137}\) An example of a non-Russian source used to validate the ties between Russia and Scandinavia is the Byzantine document, *De Administrando Imperiia*. Written by Emperor Constantine VII Porhyrogenitus, the *De Administrando Imperiia* provides a “bilingual list of the names of seven Dnieper rapids in Slavic and in Rus, implying that the two languages and therefore the peoples who spoke them were distinct entities.”\(^{138}\) The Rus names listed in the *De Administrando Imperiia* are of Scandinavian origin.\(^{139}\) Another Byzantine source used were the signed treated between the princes of Kiev and the Byzantine emperors from 911 to 945. The princes of Kiev names are of Scandinavian origin.\(^{140}\)

According to Russian historian Mikhail Lomonosov, proposing the Vikings were state-builders defied logic. In 1749 in opposition to the Normanist theory, Lomonosov devised the anti-Normanist response.\(^{141}\) Lomonosov argued that Kievan Rus had connections with the Byzantine Empire, therefore, there was no reason to compare the Byzantine Empire’s advance state to the barbaric Vikings, who failed to build cities even in their homeland or to leave any tangible legacy in Russia. To Lomonosov, the Normanist theory was simply “a plot against Russia,” and in response he created the Slavic School to teach the ideology of the anti-Normanist

---

\(^{137}\) Sheiko, *History as Therapy*, 102.  
\(^{138}\) Sheiko, *History as Therapy*, 104.  
\(^{139}\) Sheiko, *History as Therapy*, 104.  
\(^{140}\) Sheiko, *History as Therapy*, 105.  
\(^{141}\) Sheiko, *History as Therapy*, 106.
Anti-Normanists argued that Kievan Rus was of Slavic origin. Anti-Normanists believed the Slavs were state-builders and had a larger role in the creation of Kievan Rus than the Vikings.¹⁴³ According to Russian historian, Nicholas Riasanovsky, “the Slavs of the Kievan State were the inheritors of centuries of cultural development in Southern Russia.”¹⁴⁴ Riasanovsky argued that the Slavs had slowly built Kievan Rus’ culture, language, law, and literature because they had been there for hundreds of years, and “the Slavs were as capable as Vikings of having achieved military feats such as raids on Byzantium or the Caspian ports.”¹⁴⁵

Anti-Normanists critique the Russian Primary Chronicle and argue that it is not reliable evidence. They have attempted to prove that the Primary Chronicle was contradictory and the outside sources used by Normanists were inconclusive because “the invitation sent to the Varangians … resembles the history of other peoples, notably invitations sent to the Saxons by Britons, and that the story of three brothers coming to a foreign land echoes many legendary texts.”¹⁴⁶

The anti-Normanist critique of the Russian Primary Chronicle resonates with even the most committed Normanist, as even Normanists acknowledge that there is always room for doubt about the claims in the Primary Chronicle. An exaggerated account in the Primary Chronicle is exemplified in Russia’s conversion to Orthodox Christianity under Vladimir I. In this account, Prince Vladimir I was the youngest of three sons of Sviatoslav Igorevich, a grand prince of Kiev. Following the death of Sviatoslav, tension grew between the three sons for the succession of the throne. After eight years of conflict between his brothers, Vladimir emerged

¹⁴² Sheiko, History as Therapy, 102.
¹⁴³ Sheiko, History as Therapy, 106.
victoriously and ruled Kievan Rus from 980 to 1015. For the first eight years of his reign, Vladimir attempted to strengthen paganism. In 988, Vladimir accepted Orthodox Christianity and established Kievan Rus as a Christian state.\footnote{Moss, \textit{A History of Russia}, 18.}

The Russian \textit{Primary Chronicle} provides a contrasting description of Vladimir’s life before and after converting to Christianity. According to the text, Vladimir was “overcome by lust for women. He had three hundred concubines at Vÿshgorod, three hundred at Belgorod, and two hundred at Berestovo. He was insatiable in vice [and] he even seduced married women and violated young girls.”\footnote{Cross and Sherbowitz-Wetzor, \textit{The Russian Primary Chronicle}, 94.} The \textit{Primary Chronicle} acknowledges Vladimir as a wise, but deluded man due to his licentious behavior, however, once he found salvation through the Lord’s great power and never-ending wisdom, Vladimir “took the most momentous step of his regime” by converting to Christianity.\footnote{Cross and Sherbowitz-Wetzor, \textit{The Russian Primary Chronicle}, 94; Moss, \textit{A History of Russia Volume}, 18.}

As mentioned in chapter in 2, Vladimir’s conversion is an elaborate tale of how Vladimir surveyed the religions of neighboring states—Islam, Catholicism, Judaism, and Orthodox Christianity—before choosing the religion he believed fit best.

Normanists understand that the tale of Russia’s baptism served ends other than a factual record of events. This tale depicts Russia’s identity as a turn to God, but historically speaking, Vladimir should have already known of the world’s religions. Vladimir had made contact with his eastern neighbors, the Muslim Volga Bulgars, and the Latin West had already been introduced to Russia long before Vladimir became prince of Kiev.\footnote{Cross and Sherbowitz-Wetzor, \textit{The Russian Primary Chronicle}, 108-09.}

Regardless of the chronicle’s elaborate telling of Russian events, the same historians who argue against using the \textit{Primary Chronicle} as a reliable source concerning the origins of Kievan...
Rus are the same historians who rely heavily on the *Primary Chronicle* to portray the Mongols as barbaric and detrimental to the Russian state. In relation to the Traditionalists and Eurasianists debate, Normanists are the same historians who argue for the Eurasianists view—for example, George Vernadsky—while anti-Normanists advocate the Traditionalists view—for example, Dmitry Likhachev.

This passage, used by Traditionalists, comes from an apocalyptic text within the *Russian Primary Chronicle*, the same chronicle anti-Normanists regarded as an unreliable source in the Normanist/anti-Normanist debate. The text describes the invasion of the Mongols as a danger for the Russian lands as the Mongols were “the unclean people shut in the mountain by Alexander of Macedon [who shall come forth] at the end of the world … They shed blood and glorify themselves for such deeds … they marry their mother-in-law and their sister-in-law, and observe other usages of their ancestors.”¹⁵¹ To medieval Russians, incest endangered familial and social stability. The Russian church defined relatives to the eighth degree of kinship.¹⁵² This meant, Russians were forbidden to marry children, siblings, stepparents and stepchildren, aunts and uncles, nieces and nephews, brothers and sisters-in-law, and first, second, or third cousins. The Mongols, on the other hand, only forbad marriage to a man with his birth mother, sisters, or daughters.¹⁵³ Traditionalists use this as an explanation to why the Russian Orthodox Church diverged from Western tradition and thus, sought to redefine their sexual boundaries. It was the fault of the Mongol invasion. The Russians were isolated under a barbaric ruler and cut off from the rest of Europe.¹⁵⁴

---

¹⁵² Levin, *Sex and Society in the World of the Orthodox Slavs*, 136, 140-141.
¹⁵³ Jackson, “Medieval Christendom’s Encounter with the Alien,” 350.
¹⁵⁴ Levin, *Sex and Society in the World of the Orthodox Slavs*, 11.
The Identity Crisis

Traditionalist/anti-Normanists use and discard the credibility of medieval Russian literature to fit their agenda. In terms of the Mongols, anti-Mongol ideology is prevalent throughout post-Mongol Russian history because it creates Russia’s “geo-body,” which is a nation’s territory, practices, and values that carve out the “we-self,” or identity of the nation, as well as, the “otherness.” According to Thongchai Winichakul, “the creation of otherness, the enemy in particular, is necessary to justify the existing political and social against rivals from without as well as from within.” The Mongols provide the “other” in Russian history due to Russia’s struggling relationship between territory and identity, or in other terms, its geopolitical culture. Russia has always had an ambivalent relationship with Asia. This is due to Peter the Great, who viewed Russia as a branch of European culture and emphasized the importance of the country’s spatial dimensions.

During the reign of Peter the Great, Russia began to see themselves as strictly European. Peter I pushed cultural, political, and economic reforms based on European models, such as adopting the European state and class system, as well as, abandoning the traditional Russian title “czar” for the European title “emperor.” Peter I emphasized the importance of Russia’s location, so he moved the capital to his founded city, St. Petersburg, to make Russia closer to Europe. Furthermore, to become more European, Russia followed the rest of Europe who identified itself as a contrasting image and culture to that of Asia (the Orient) to identify what it meant to be European (termed Orientalism). To Russia, the Orient not only meant the far east, but the south, including the steppes, which had been inhabited by nomadic groups of eastern origins. By

---

the eighteenth century, Russian officials referred to steppe peoples from the south and east as “wild animals” and as the Russian empire expanded, the steppe peoples represented “the savage, the brutish, the unreliable, and the unruly while Russia stood for civilization, morality, and stately order.”

During the nineteenth century, when the Enlightenment reached Russia, the Mongols suffered the classifications of scientific Orientalism, such as blaming the Mongols as the cause of mental retardation in the West, termed “Mongoloid.” The Mongols were compared to orangutans as they were believed to be behind developmentally, and the term “Mongoloid” was linked to mental retardation when a doctor saw a similarity between the facial features of a Mongol and a down-syndrome Caucasian children. The “Mongoloid” was described as forever having the maturity of a child, which Western scientists believed was a characteristic of the Mongols. The West blamed the Mongols for mental retardation in Europe as there was the notion that they raped European women during the Mongol Empire. Parents whose children were born mentally handicapped were believed to have Mongol blood. Thus, as the West blamed the Mongols for developmental progress in society, Traditionalists did not accept its Mongol influence and blamed the Golden Horde for Russia’s “backwardness” compared to the rest of Europe. Both Normanists and anti-Normanists were able to accept Viking ancestry because Scandinavia did not have eastern connotations. Traditionalists pushed for a western identity and accepting its Mongol culture resulted in being developmentally behind in the eyes of its West.

---

159 Weatherford, Genghis Khan and the Making of the Modern World, 258.
Therefore, by interpreting Russian literature to fit the traditionalist view, Traditionalists were able to follow Western Europe and create an identity dichotomous to the Mongols and label them as the “other.”

As anti-Mongol sentiment and Orientalism grew after the fall of the Golden Horde in an effort to shape for Russia a strictly western identity, how were the Mongols viewed by the rest of the world during the thirteenth century? Chapter four examines medieval Persian, Chinese, and European accounts about the greater Mongol Empire and how the Mongol Empire was a thirteenth-century world system.
CHAPTER FOUR: A THIRTEENTH-CENTURY WORLD SYSTEM

During the thirteenth century, the Mongol Empire stretched from the Sea of Japan to eastern Europe. It was divided into four khanates: Khanate of the Great Khan, or Yuan Khanate/Dynasty (modern-day China), Chagatai Khanate (modern-day Mongolia and China), Ilkhanate (modern-day Iran), and Kipchak Khanate, or Khanate of the Golden Horde (modern-day Russia). Confronted by the Mongols, the people inhabiting these areas, the Chinese, Muslims, and Christians from the East and West, were all concerned and began to acquire information to understand these conquering peoples. An accumulation of reports about the Mongols were produced from all areas of the empire.

This chapter serves two purposes. The first part examines reports from the larger Mongol Empire, including a Persian account from the Ilkhanate concerning the legislative work of Ghāzān Khan, and a Chinese account on the court style of the Great Khan from the Great Khanate. Unlike the Golden Horde where the Mongols were absentee rulers, the rest of the empire was directly under Mongol rule, so these reports allow a glimpse of how peoples from other parts of the empire viewed Mongol authority. The second part examines the Mongol empire as a world system and its contribution to the medieval world.

The Mongol Khans in China

Under Genghis Khan, the Mongols in the steppes of northern China were united, establishing the Mongol Empire in 1206. In 1211, he began his conquest of the neighboring Jin Dynasty. In 1215, Genghis Khan sacked and captured the Jin capital of Zhongdu, and between

---

1232 and 1233, under the reign of his third son, Ögedei Khan, Kaifeng fell. The siege of Caizhou in 1234 marked the collapse of the Jin Dynasty in northern China. In 1250, under Kublai Khan, Genghis Khan’s grandson from his fourth son, the Mongols turned south to invade the Song Dynasty. In 1276, the Song capital of Hangzhou fell, and in 1279, with the destruction of the Song fleet near Guangzhou, the Song Dynasty fell. The Mongols now had control of both northern and southern China, establishing the Yuan Dynasty or Great Khanate.

The poet, Yuan Haowen, recounts the destruction in the wake of the fall of Kaifeng by Ögedei Khan in “Crossing the Yellow River, June 12”: “White bones scattered like tangled hemp, how soon before mulberry and catalpa turn to dragon-sands? I only know north of the river there is no life: crumbled houses, scattered chimney smoke from a few homes.”¹⁶⁴ Near-total destruction was typical of Mongol conquests, however, after establishment of the Great Khanate, the Khans were applauded for their achievements within the empire. According to a report “from an oriental source” describing the court style of the Great Khan (1259–94), Kublai Khan was praised for his laws, justice, wit, and good intentions.¹⁶⁵ The source summarizes a few of Kublai Khan’s characteristic habits and qualities that shaped him as a ruler:

One thing which demonstrates his wit and intelligence is the fact that he was on intimate terms with men of merit and masters of science, that he liked their company and welcomed them […] that in place of the Uighur script he worked out and organized a new script […] In this script, he issued orders to all countries and he made it famous like the reputation of his justice. He has an innate sense for administering the laws of justice […] He wrote to the nobles in the various countries and to the assistants of majesty: How can it be reasonable to give a thousand balish [gold coin] to one while another hangs himself in despair and who can approve of this? Whoever provides against all expectation more than is required, is bound to lack what is required in the event of real need […] With this

¹⁶⁵ Spuler, History of the Mongols Based on Eastern and Western Accounts of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries, 165.
in mind he laid down a rule which sums up the general principles of monarchial justice, which encompasses the universal order and governs the existence of the sons of men.\textsuperscript{166}

The Mongols initially tried to force their own law on the Chinese population, but it was unsuccessful, so Kublai Khan developed a two-tier legal system: “the Mongols would continue to be governed by their own rules and judges and the Chinese would be governed by a legal system based mostly on that of the Tang Dynasty […] Chinese people would fill judge positions, and the post of \textit{p’an-kuan}, the practical manager of governmental affairs at the Ministry of Justice, would also be taken up by a Chinese.”\textsuperscript{167} With this judicial system in place, there were only 135 offences that warranted the death penalty compared to the 293 death penalty offenses under the Song.\textsuperscript{168} Furthermore, Kublai Khan established a system of punishment through community service: “first-time thieves, for example, would be tattooed accordingly, and forced to serve as auxiliary policemen for five years. In Kublai’s own words, ‘Prisoners are not mere flock of sheep. How can they be suddenly executed? It is proper that they be instead enslaved and assigned to pan gold with sieve.’”\textsuperscript{169} Under Mongol rule, a more lenient and socially productive system was established.

\textsuperscript{166} Spuler, \textit{History of the Mongols Based on Eastern and Western Accounts of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries}, 166.
\textsuperscript{167} Ben Chua, “The Mongols brought violence and destruction to all aspects of China’s civilization.” To what extent is this an accurate reflection of the period, 1271-1294? https://www.academia.edu/9249757/ (accessed April 1, 2020).
\textsuperscript{168} Ben Chua, “The Mongols brought violence and destruction to all aspects of China’s civilization.” To what extent is this an accurate reflection of the period, 1271-1294? https://www.academia.edu/9249757/ (accessed April 1, 2020).
\textsuperscript{169} Ben Chua, “The Mongols brought violence and destruction to all aspects of China’s civilization.” To what extent is this an accurate reflection of the period, 1271-1294? https://www.academia.edu/9249757/ (accessed April 1, 2020).
Mongol Impact in China

The Great Khanate is remembered for the rule of Kublai Khan. China experienced a golden age under his rule because he patronized painting and the theater. Kublai Khan and his successors also “recruited and employed Confucian scholars and Tibetan Buddhist monks as advisers, a policy that led to many innovative ideas the construction of new temples and monasteries.”

The Mongol Empire also funded advances in medicine and astronomy, extended the Grand Canal in the direction of Beijing, and constructed the building of a capital city in Daidu (present-day Beijing).

The Mongol Khans in Persia (Modern-Day Iran)

In 1256, Hülägü Khan, grandson of Genghis Khan, founded the Ilkhanate, and by 1258, he had captured Baghdad and all of modern-day Iran. According to a report of the Mongol conquest in Baghdad, the Mongols were “monsters [and] the brightness of the day became darkened” after the invasion. However, despite the initial destruction caused by the invasion, the Persians praised the legislative work of the Mongols. In the report by Rashīd ad-Dīn concerning the work of Ghāzān Khan, the most prominent of khans to rule the Ilkhanate, Ghāzān Khan’s rule was “free from all stains of illusion and folly. In view of the exalted position and the importance of the ruler’s office, and in his view of his great power, it is impossible to imagine any compulsion or coercion.”

The Persians accepted and commended Mongol rule because of

---

172 Rashīd ad-Dīn was a Persian statesman, historian, and physician. He is the author of a universal history, Jāmi al-tawārīkh (Collector of Chronicles). He joined the Ilkhanate court and became Ghāzān Khan’s vizier in 1298.
173 Spuler, History of the Mongols Based on Eastern and Western Accounts of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries, 146.
the Mongol’s tolerance of religion. When the Mongol Empire established the Ilkhanate in a Muslim populated area, it did not dictate which religion should be worshipped, despite the Great Khanate being predominately Buddhist. Ghāzān Khan himself converted to Islam in November 1295, and during his reign from 1295–1304 constructed “mosques, religious schools, dervish monasteries, and charitable institutions.”

Rashīd ad-Dīn’s report extends further than the religious impact of Mongol rule. He also covers Ghāzān Khan’s response to Persia’s financial situation. According to Rashīd ad-Dīn, before Ghāzān Khan “ascended to the throne, the treasures of his predecessors had been spent […] Ghāzān took the greatest personal interest in the welfare of the state […] anything written which was laid before him, he himself corrected in the draft. Due to this, the empire prospered.” The treasures of the Khans before Ghāzān Khan were stolen or spent. Hūlāgū Khan’s treasure was stolen by the guards who sold the gold and jewelry to merchants; Ahmad Khan (1282–4) squandered all of his treasure; and Gaikhātū Khan gave his to the people. The Ilkhanate was on the verge of bankruptcy due to long-term mismanagement of treasure and greedy taxation policies. Therefore, Ghāzān Khan had a great tent set up with all the treasures he had received from provinces of the empire. He had everything sorted separately according to type and weight and marked the amount, as well as, the recipient’s name on the gift. Within two weeks, “he spent in this way three hundred tomans in money, and distributed twenty thousand garments, fifty belts studded with jewels, three hundred golden belts, a hundred bars of red gold […] [and] not a penny and not a single garment that he wanted to grant as a gift took the

174 Spuler, History of the Mongols Based on Eastern and Western Accounts of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries, 146.
175 Spuler, History of the Mongols Based on Eastern and Western Accounts of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries, 146-7.
176 Spuler, History of the Mongols Based on Eastern and Western Accounts of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries, 147.
form of draft on a province, but everything was presented in cash and kind.”

Through gift giving, Ghāzān Khan, ensured the Ilkhanate was supplied with sufficient means. To ensure the Ilkhanate would never be put in another financial predicament, he regulated the treasury. Ghāzān Khan introduced a new order that set up treasure houses that were strictly guarded and introduced bookkeeping to record the flow of supply coming in and out of the treasury.

The taxation policies before Ghāzān Khan’s rule were rapacious. Taxes were levied in the shape of qopchur and tamgha (cattle and excise tax), in which governors would levy the qopchur from peasants twice a year, and in some areas, up to twenty or thirty times. According to a report,

[The Governor] made it a rule to levy qopchur sums included in his revenue, but then, if a state messenger arrived on some state business or in order to demand tax revenues or to make other requirements, he would use this as a pretext to levy the tax a further time. The more frequently such state messengers arrived and thus claimed increasingly greater sums for their expenses and demands, the better such a governor was pleased, since he collected revenue either with reference to state requirements or with reference to expenses of board and lodging for the state messenger.

Governors would use up two or three qopchur per year plus the excise tax of the cities “for messengers expenses,” of which in reality, they kept the greater part for themselves.

Ghāzān Khan created reforms with new tax regulations. He issued an order that increased control over the governors to suppress their power in the taxation method and where necessary, ensured

---

177 Spuler, History of the Mongols Based on Eastern and Western Accounts of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries, 147.
178 Spuler, History of the Mongols Based on Eastern and Western Accounts of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries, 162.
179 Spuler, History of the Mongols Based on Eastern and Western Accounts of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries, 148.
180 Spuler, History of the Mongols Based on Eastern and Western Accounts of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries., 149-50.
punishment was severe. Ghāzān Khan also ordered the employment of reliable officials and created a regular tax schedule, which laid down the dates for payments.\textsuperscript{181}

The Ilkhanate created a union between the Mongols and the Persian nobility. Unlike the Russians who attempted to create a dichotomous identity from the Mongols, the cultural synthesis achieved in the Ilkhanate “formed the basis of the emerging Iranian identity.”\textsuperscript{182} For subsequent Muslim dynasties ruling what is now modern-day Iran, links to Genghis Khan continued to be the source of legitimacy.\textsuperscript{183}

**Mongol Impact in Persia (Modern-Day Iran)**

The Mongols greatest impact in Iran was the exchange of ideas in the arts and sciences between Persia and China. Due to the cultural transmission support by the Mongols, Chinese painters influenced Persian painting. During the Ilkhanate, “dragon and phoenix motifs from China first appear in Persian art drawing […] the representation of clouds, trees, and landscapes in Persian painting also owes a great deal to Chinese art.”\textsuperscript{184} The interchange between China and the Ilkhanate increased the recognition of Islamic scholars in astronomy and medicine. Kublai Khan and other Mongol Khans in China invited specialists who assisted in astronomical and medical advancements. For example, Persian astronomer Jamal Al-din was invited to China and helped develop a new, more accurate calendar. Additionally, the Office for Muslim Medicine

\textsuperscript{181} Spuler, *History of the Mongols Based on Eastern and Western Accounts of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries*, 153.
\textsuperscript{183} Lane, “The Mongols in Iran,” 267.
was established in China, which resulted in the flow of Persian medicinal ideas between West and East Asia, and eventually, Europe.\textsuperscript{185}

**The Mongol Empire as a Thirteenth-Century World System**

The barbaric stereotype that was created based on medieval accounts about the Mongol invasion, creates a perception of the Mongols that diverts attention away from their contributions made to the thirteenth-century world. Although the Mongol conquests were undeniably destructive, their influence on thirteenth-century civilization should not be overlooked.

In *The Modern World-System*, Immanuel Wallerstein outlines a paradigm of globalization, which he calls the “European world-economy”—a system that does not necessarily encompass the entire globe, but that nevertheless transcends political boundaries, linking various juridically-defined political units together exclusively through economic means. Wallerstein argues that this system is essentially a modern development that came into existence in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, and points to the rise of capitalism as the essential of its establishment. According to Wallerstein, this capitalist world-economic system emerged in response to the collapse of feudalism, which had experienced a severe economic crisis from 1300–1450.

As Wallerstein suggests, this new world-system was based on an international division of labor, which can be organized into four-categories: core, semi-periphery, periphery, and external arenas. Whereas core countries focus on high skill and capital-intensive production, the rest of the regions focus on extraction of raw materials and low-skill labor, with the labor and surplus of the periphery countries serving and reinforcing the hegemony of the core regions. Wallerstein’s

system is thus essentially Marxism on a trans-national scale, with the proletariat—wage laborers that produce goods and services—representing the periphery, and the ruling class, who own the means of production, and derive their wealth through appropriation of surplus produced by the proletariat—representing the core countries.

In *Before European Hegemony*, Janet Abu-Lughod reinterprets the origins and historical development of Wallerstein's world system. Abu-Lughod views the century between 1250 and 1350 as a “turning point” in world history, rather than the fifteenth and early sixteenth century. She also argues that the positions of the East and West during the thirteenth century were reversed compared to Immanuel Wallerstein’s sixteenth-century world system model.\(^{186}\) According to Abu-Lughod, the thirteenth-century world system integrated a set of eight interlinked subsystems (defined by language, religion, empire) in Europe, the Middle East (including northern Africa), and Asia (coastal and steppe zones).\(^{187}\) Thirteenth-century Europe was a periphery, whereas the Mongol Empire (Middle East and China) were the core. Abu-Lughod argues that the similarities between trading partners in the thirteenth century outweighed the differences, and wherever there were differences, the West fell behind.\(^{188}\) These common traits included the invention of money and credit, the mechanisms used for pooling capital and distributing risk, and the accumulation of merchant wealth.\(^{189}\) According to Abu-Lughod, Europe did not pull ahead because her “unique qualities allowed her to” because “other world powers had […] an even more sophisticated set of economic institutions than, the Europeans, who by the


thirteenth century had entered their world system”\textsuperscript{190} Rather, Europe pulled ahead because the East was temporarily in disarray geographically, politically, and demographically.\textsuperscript{191} Wallerstein’s failure to begin the story early enough, Abu-Lughod argues, has resulted in the distorted explanation for the rise of the West. The purpose of her work is to correct this explanation by examining the opportunity the thirteenth-century world system created which allowed the rise of Europe. Without the geopolitical factors within the rest of the world, Europe would not have become the hegemonic power it was from the sixteenth century on.\textsuperscript{192}

Abu-Lughod addresses Wallerstein’s “modern” world system and argues that his pattern of organization—“a capitalist core hegemon in northwest Europe, an agrarian semiperiphery geographically concentrated in eastern and southern Europe, and a periphery, located everywhere else”—is not the only pattern conceivable for a world system.\textsuperscript{193} The thirteenth-century world system had multiple coexisting core powers across the Mongol Empire. She corrects Wallerstein’s Eurocentric world-system by highlighting the worldliness of a diverse trade network with Asia at its core. The world system was dominated by the Mongols, not Europe, and Abu-Lughod illustrates how the East ultimately shaped the West, which invalidates the West’s concept of “Orientalism.” The East was not “backwards” or “uncivilized” compared to the West, and without thirteenth-century Asia, Europe would have achieved its “modern” position in world history.

The most important Mongol contribution was that the Mongol Empire linked Asia and Europe, which “ushered in an era of frequent and extended contacts between the East and

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{190} Abu-Lughod, \textit{Before European Hegemony}, 18.
\textsuperscript{191} Abu-Lughod, \textit{Before European Hegemony}, 18.
\textsuperscript{192} Abu-Lughod, \textit{Before European Hegemony}, 20.
\textsuperscript{193} Abu-Lughod, \textit{Before European Hegemony}, 364.
\end{flushright}
West.”


200 Thomas T. Allsen, Culture and Conquest in Mongol Eurasia (Cambridge University Press, 2001)
With the Mongol Empire’s success in connecting the East and the West, did hegemony shift from the East to the West and why did the Mongol Empire World System ultimately fail? The most important contributor to the fall of the Mongol hegemony was the significant drop in the population simultaneously across the world as a result of the Bubonic Plague. The plague caused a drop in the overall volume and value of long-distance trade, as well as, weakened the Mongols internally. The plague weakened the Mongol army and as a consequence, the Mongols “lost” China in 1368, which disrupted a key link in the overland route of the trade system, as well as, the routes through the Indian Ocean and South China Sea. This inconsistency in the eastern subsystem was experienced through the entire trading system.201 Although the fall of the Mongol Empire World System occurred, Abu-Lughod argues it was the “devolution of the preexisting system that facilitated Europe’s easy conquest.”202 The Mongol Empire laid the foundation for a European World System through their advanced trading network during the thirteenth century. The West did not need to invent a system, as the groundwork already existed in the thirteenth century when Europe was only a peripheral and new to the system. As for the East, there was never a “decline,” but rather a transformation. According to Abu-Lughod, “a theory of systematic change should be able to account for system decay as well as system growth.”203 After the fall of the Mongol Empire, the East continued to develop, expand, and create their own system of connectivity, a world system unique from that of the West.204

201 Abu-Lughod, Before European Hegemony, 360.
202 Abu-Lughod, Before European Hegemony, 361.
203 Abu-Lughod, Before European Hegemony, 34.
204 Abu-Lughod, Before European Hegemony, 361.
CONCLUSION

Medieval Russian epics, chronicles, and tales describe the horrors of the Mongol invasion, and Traditionalist Russian scholars from the early modern to modern period have used the literature to depict the Mongols as barbaric and detrimental to Russian history. By re-examining Russian literature from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, it is clear that Traditionalists suppressed the importance of Mongol influence in Russia by failing to use the literary texts in their entirety. This is due to their ambivalent attitude toward a relationship with Asia, and their inability to accept Russia’s multicultural identity. In order to identify with Europe, Traditionalists pushed for a strictly western identity by following Europe’s path of Orientalism, “othering” themselves from their predecessors. Traditionalists termed Mongol rule in Russia as the “Tatar Yoke,” which they blame for Russia’s “backwardness” compared to Europe.

The medieval Russian identity emerged under Mongol rule as the absentee rule gave the Russians the impression that their “Russian Soul” and unity under their faith kept the Mongols away. Traditionalists use this medieval identity to depict the Mongols as the barbaric other. By selecting specific literature, Traditionalists were able to create an anti-Mongol sentiment and neglect any positive Mongol influence. However, through the examination of the same literature used in its entirety, as well as, neglected literature, the significance of the Golden Horde can be brought to light. Under Mongol rule, the Russian Orthodox Church gained power and influence due to religious toleration of the Mongols. Furthermore, the Mongols were responsible for the rise of Moscow because the alliance between the Mongols and Russian principalities in terms of commerce, administration, and protection allowed Moscow to become the strongest and most influential principality in Russia during the fifteenth century. The Mongol conquest guided the
course of development that Russia would naturally accept in the years following the fall of the Golden Horde.

As previously stated, Traditionalists strove for a strictly western identity. This is due to Russia’s struggling relationship with its geopolitical culture. As Russia strove to become more European, European Orientalism created a stark difference between the image of Europe compared to Asia. The West blamed the Mongols for the lack of developmental progress in Western society, therefore, to stay alongside Europe, Traditionalist/anti-Normanists used and discarded the credibility of medieval Scandinavian and Russian literature to fit their agenda. Traditionalists/anti-Normanists accepted its Viking culture because Scandinavia did not have eastern connotations. Accepting its Mongol culture resulted in being developmentally behind in the eyes of its West. Therefore, by interpreting Russian literature to fit the traditionalist view, Traditionalists were able to follow Western Europe and create an identity dichotomous to the Mongols, blaming them for Russia’s “backwardness,” and labelling them as the “other.”

Although Traditionalists attempted to discredit any Mongol influence, accounts from other parts of the larger Mongol Empire demonstrate the importance of the Mongol reign. Both Persian and Chinese accounts accept and praise Mongol rule, and unlike the Russians who rejected any similarities to the Mongols, the Persians used their Mongol identity as a way to legitimize their claim to rule. The greater Mongol Empire globalized the thirteenth-century world through its trading networks throughout the empire. The Mongols promoted trade between foreign states, and this receptiveness to foreigners was a critical factor in promoting cultural exchange, leading to the exchange of products, peoples, technology, and science. The East shaped the West, contrary to the concept of “Orientalism.” The East was not “backwards” or “uncivilized” compared to the West. Without thirteenth-century Asia, Europe would not have
achieved its “modern” position in world history. The Mongol Empire was a thirteenth-century world system, which established the foundation that a latter European World System would be built on in the sixteenth century.

There is no denial that the Mongols were destructive during their conquests. Despite the destruction caused by the Mongol invasion, the Mongol Empire’s achievements and legacy should not be undermined or undervalued. This research has contributed to the legacy of the Mongols. Initially destructive, as an authority, the Mongols were fair-minded and accepting. They assimilated the existing ideology and policies of the lands they conquered, and through this way of governing, the Mongol Empire was the largest contiguous empire the world has ever seen.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Hosseini, Dustin. *The Effects of the Mongol Empire on Russia*. The University of Texas at Arlington, 2005.


