

Reviews

Bulat Raimovich Rakhimzianov, *Kasimovskoe khanstvo (1445–1552 gg.): Ocherki istorii* (The Khanate of Kasimov [1445–1552]: Essays in History). 206 pp., illus. Kazan: Tatarskoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo, 2009. ISBN-13 978-5298017213.

Vadim Vintserovich Trepavlov, *Zolotaia orda v XIV stoletii* (The Golden Horde in the 14th Century). 78 pp., maps. Moscow: Kvadriga, 2010. ISBN-13 978-5917910291.

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Russia's long subordination (1237–1480) to the Mongols—both the main empire under the great khan and the Juchid *ulus*, commonly if inaccurately known as the Golden Horde—has not lacked for scholarly attention. In the West, specialists have generally endorsed some version of the idea that the Mongol invasion represented an onslaught of death and destruction, a crisis from which Russia recovered within a century—in part because the princes of Moscow, in particular, did not hesitate to exploit and eventually adopted certain techniques of rule used by the country's Mongol/Tatar overlords.¹ Scholars such as Brian Davies, John Fennell, Charles Halperin, Edward Keenan, Craig Kennedy, Michael Khodarkovsky, Janet Martin, Donald Ostrowski, and Jaroslaw Pelenski have explored the pragmatic approach taken by the Russian princes toward the fissiparous Tatar khanates, medieval Russians' religiously based reluctance to acknowledge the Mongol victory, and possible points of connection between Muscovite and Tatar government and military organization.²

¹ For one succinct statement of the view that Russia had begun to recover from Tatar domination by the end of the 13th century, see John Fennell, *The Crisis of Medieval Russia, 1200–1304* (London: Longman, 1983), 166–67. For a far-reaching think piece on the idea of Russia/USSR as a successor state to the Horde, see Stephen Kotkin, “Mongol Commonwealth? Exchange and Governance across the Post-Mongol Space,” *Kritika* 8, 3 (2007): 487–531.

² A far from exhaustive list would include Fennell, *The Crisis of Medieval Russia*; Brian L. Davies, *Warfare, State, and Society on the Black Sea Steppe, 1500–1700* (London: Routledge, 2007); Charles J. Halperin, *Russia and the Golden Horde: The Mongol Impact on Medieval Russian History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985); Halperin, *The Tatar Yoke: The Image of the Mongols in Medieval Russia*, rev. ed. (Bloomington, IN: Slavica Publishers, 2009); Edward Louis Keenan, Jr., “Muscovy and Kazan: Some Introductory Remarks on the

The view inside Russia, as Vadim Trepavlov notes in his introduction to *Zolotaia orda v XIV stoletii*, has traditionally been different. The lessons taught to schoolchildren regarding the “Mongol–Tatar Yoke,” itself a telling term, have emphasized the “harsh enslavement of the Russian land by conquerors” bent on “sucking the juice from long-suffering Russia,” a national tragedy of epic proportions (5). In this small book Trepavlov—a leading research fellow at the Institute of Russian History, Russian Academy of Sciences, who has spent most of the last two decades studying Russia and the Tatars—attempts to set the record straight.³ He takes issue with arguments that Moscow was a successor state to the Horde: although he agrees that Russian practices of the 14th–16th centuries may, in specific instances, have resembled those of the Tatars, he insists that “in and of themselves” these similarities “are not an argument for a Golden Horde ‘inheritance’ or some kind of historical continuity between Russia and the Golden Horde” (7). In this respect, he disagrees with the work not only of Donald Ostrowski and Jaroslaw Pelenski, whom he cites, but also of Russian imperial historians such as N. M. Karamzin and the émigré historian George Vernadsky, whose works inspired much of the Western historiographical tradition on this topic.⁴ Although I do not find

Patterns of Steppe Diplomacy,” *Slavic Review* 26, 4 (1967): 548–58; Craig Gayen Kennedy, “The Juchids of Muscovy: A Study of Personal Ties between Émigré Tatar Dynasts and the Muscovite Grand Princes in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries” (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1994); Michael Khodarkovsky, “Taming the ‘Wild Steppe’: Muscovy’s Southern Frontier, 1480–1600,” *Russian History* 26, 3 (1999): 241–97, which became chapter 3 of *Russia’s Steppe Frontier: The Making of a Colonial Empire, 1500–1800* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002); Janet Martin, “Muscovite Frontier Policy: The Case of the Khanate of Kasimov,” *Russian History* 19, 1–4 (1992): 169–79; Martin, “Multiethnicity in Muscovy: A Consideration of Christian and Muslim Tatars in the 1550s–1580s,” *Journal of Early Modern History* 5, 1 (2001): 1–23; Donald G. Ostrowski, *Muscovy and the Mongols: Cross-Cultural Influences on the Steppe Frontier, 1304–1589* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); and Jaroslaw Pelenski, *Russia and Kazan: Conquest and Imperial Ideology (1438–1566)* (The Hague: Mouton, 1974). See also Ostrowski’s reviews on the Mongols and steppe nomads in *Kritika* 5, 2 (2004): 383–85, and *Kritika* 8, 2 (2007): 431–41.

³ Other works by Trepavlov include *Gosudarstvennyi stroi Mongol’skoi imperii XIII v.: Problema istoricheskoi preemstvennosti* (Moscow: Nauka, 1993); *Nogai v Bashkirii, XV–XVII vv.: Kniazheskie rody nogaiskogo proiskhozhdeniia* (Ufa: Muzei arkhologii i etnografii AN Respubliki Bashkortostan, 1997); *The Formation and Early History of the Manghit Yurt* (Bloomington: Indiana University Research Institute for Inner Asian Studies, 2001); *Istoriia Nogaiskoi ordy* (Moscow: Vostochnaia literatura RAN, 2001); *Posol’skaia kniga po sviaziam Rossii s Nogaiskoi ordoi (1576 g.)* (Moscow: Rossiiskaia akademiia nauk, Institut rossiiskoi istorii, 2003); and “*Belyi tsar*”: *Obraz monarkha i predstavleniia o poddanstve u narodov Rossii XV–XVIII vv.* (Moscow: Vostochnaia literatura, 2007). Manghit (also Mangyt) Yurt was the Nogais’ name for themselves.

⁴ N. M. Karamzin, *Istoriia gosudarstva rossiskogo*, 5th ed. (St. Petersburg: I. Einerling, 1842; repr. Moscow: Kniga, 1989), bk. 1, 5: col. 222–23; George Vernadsky, *The Mongols and Russia*, vol. 3 of his *History of Russia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1946). Trepavlov cites

Trepavlov's noncontinuity argument convincing, his separation of Muscovy and the Mongols allows him to focus on the Juchid ulus as a sociopolitical and cultural entity that had its own independent concerns, among which the subjugation of Russia occupied a minor place. Compared with the traditional "Mongol–Tatar Yoke" approach, Trepavlov's is refreshingly free of ideology.

This is not a book for specialists. With only 65 pages of text, Trepavlov has little space for the fine points of academic debate. He does provide a brief overview of the literature, footnotes citing printed sources and secondary works, and a bibliography that lists titles in English, French, and German—impressive in a book aimed at a general Russian-speaking audience. But the book ignores most major studies (including Trepavlov's own); and the literature survey is necessarily cursory, dismissing complex historical arguments in a paragraph or two.

Nevertheless, Trepavlov fulfills the task he sets for himself. Short chapters survey the Horde's territory and population, its state structure, its economy, and its military organization. These model essays reveal how the Juchid ulus operated and how Russia functioned within it as an integral part. Trepavlov explains that the two major obligations imposed on the Russian princes—the *vykhod*, usually translated as tribute but in fact a levy imposed by the khans on all subject towns; and the *iarlyk*, the need to obtain written permission in person, at first from the Mongol emperor, later from the Juchid khan in Sarai, to hold office—were part of the Mongol/Tatar system of governance and not a unique burden on vanquished Russia. He details the military/civilian administrative hierarchies and explores the relative importance of agriculture, pastoralism, and trade. He then gives a "brief political history" of the Horde—head-spinning for the reader trying to follow the whirligig of Juchid politics, with one khan after another demoted or dead, often by unnatural means. He ends with a summary of the career of Mamai, who lost to Dmitrii Donskoi at the battle of Kulikovo in 1380. He argues that Kulikovo was important not because of the Russian victory, which Khan Tokhtamysh reversed in 1382, but because the ongoing struggle between Mamai and Tokhtamysh weakened the Horde. In the end, both Russia and Lithuania benefited from the resulting political vacuum (63–65).

Jaroslav Pelenski, "State and Society in Muscovite Russia and the Mongol–Turkic System in the Sixteenth Century," *Forschungen zur osteuropäischen Geschichte* 27 (1980): 156–67; and D. Ostrowski, "Mongol'skie korni russkikh gosudarstvennykh uchrezhdenii," in *Amerikanskaia rusistika: Vekhi istoriografii poslednikh let. Period kievskoi i moskovskoi Rusi* (Samara: Samarskii gosudarstvennyi universitet, 2001), a translation of Donald Ostrowski, "The Mongol Origins of Muscovite Political Institutions," *Slavic Review* 49, 4 (1990): 525–42. He prefers the approach taken by Charles Halperin in *Russia and the Golden Horde* and *Tatar Yoke*.

Although most of the information is not new, the writing is clear and engaging. The text also includes a couple of gems, as in the discussion of how the Juchids reconciled the demands of their new religion, Islam, with the dynastic principle favoring direct descent from Chinggis Khan. They decided that Chinggis had fulfilled all the pillars of Islam except the *hajj* and had pronounced the *shahada*, which made him a Muslim in all but name and therefore a worthy ancestor (24).⁵ As a first step away from the traditional classroom approach to Mongol rule and its aftermath, this book offers an excellent introduction.

The system that Trepavlov describes, in its heyday in the first decades of the 14th century, soon showed signs of decay. The Black Death traveled along the Silk Road, with devastating effects on local populations, societies, and economies. Tokhtamysh beat Mamai, but he could not withstand his former patron Timur (Tamerlane), the great military force of the age whom Tokhtamysh foolishly challenged. In two massive campaigns, Timur reduced Sarai to ashes.⁶ The Juchid ulus never recovered. By the mid-15th century, it had split into several independent khanates (Kazan; the Great Horde, later Astrakhan; Crimea; and Siberia), and two nomadic Nogai hordes. Tatars also became established in the Russian appanage principality known as the khanate of Kasimov, the subject of Rakhimzianov's *Kasimovskoe khanstvo*.

Kasimov, centered on the Russian fortress of Meshcherskii gorodok and located on the Oka River east of Riazan', was only one of several southeastern border towns routinely used by Muscovite rulers to lure Juchid princes into their service. Kashira, Serpukhov, and Zvenigorod served a similar purpose; and it was not unusual for a particular Tatar prince to cycle through these and other towns. At times, the same princes secured sufficient support from internal political factions to rule the independent khanates of Kazan or Astrakhan. For a while, the khans of Crimea declared Kasimov part of their ulus, a claim that the Russians refused to recognize (the Crimeans also insisted, without success, that the grand princes owed them tribute payments for Riazan' and other towns on the Oka, which the khans regarded as having once belonged to them).⁷

Kasimov remained an administrative unit within the Russian state until the late 17th century, but it lost its importance after Ivan IV's forces

⁵ The *shahada*: "There is no God but God, and Muhammad is the messenger of God."

⁶ On Tamerlane, see, e.g., Justin Marozzi, *Tamerlane: Sword of Islam, Conqueror of the World* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2006). Marozzi details Timur's conflict with Tokhtamysh on 157–200. For a summary of Russian archeologists' excavations in Sarai and the surrounding regions, see German A. Fedorov-Davydov, *The Silk Road and the Cities of the Golden Horde* (Berkeley, CA: Zinat Press, 2001).

⁷ Khodarkovsky, "Taming the 'Wild Steppe,'" 260.

conquered Kazan in 1552 and much of its autonomy after backing the second False Dmitrii in the Time of Troubles (1598–1613) instead of the victorious Romanovs. It first passed into Tatar hands sometime between 1445 and 1452, probably as a reward for the assistance given by Khan Ulu-Muhammad of Kazan and his sons Kasim and Iakub to Vasiliï II of Moscow during Vasiliï's conflict with his cousin Dmitriï Shemiaka. For the next century, although the Russian grand prince appointed Kasimov's rulers and demanded that they muster with their cavalry as auxiliaries in his campaigns, the Juchid prince of the moment maintained a separate existence, living off his lands and according to his own religion and customs. This is the century that Rakhimzianov discusses in *Kasimovskoe khanstvo*.

Kasimov has received a fair amount of attention for such a small place. In the mid-1860s, V. V. Vel'iaminov-Zernov published a four-volume history of the khans (*tsari*) and sultans (*tsarevichi*) of Kasimov.⁸ Thirty years later, N. I. Shishkin reexamined some of Vel'iaminov-Zernov's sources in a single volume, including 17th-century cadastral descriptions of the town.⁹ By then, there was a thriving Russian community and more churches than mosques, but in the 15th and 16th centuries, Kasimov was predominantly Tatar and Muslim. Its princes came first from Kazan, then from Crimea. But after the Crimean khan decided that Poland-Lithuania paid better than Moscow, Vasiliï III responded by investing princes from Astrakhan, Crimea's bitter enemy.¹⁰

Vel'iaminov-Zernov regarded the establishment of Kasimov primarily as a defensive move by a Russian government desperate to control Tatar raids from the south and east. Moscow's use of Kasimov as a staging ground for attacks on Kazan has also received considerable attention.¹¹ But Janet Martin argues convincingly that Kasimov and towns like it were a major component of Muscovite frontier policy, through which the grand princes neutralized potential troublemakers in the steppe and stabilized the political relationships

⁸ V. V. Vel'iaminov-Zernov, *Issledovanie o kasimovskikh tsariakh i tsarevichakh*, 4 vols. (St. Petersburg: Imperatorskaia akademiia nauk, 1863–67). The rulers of Kasimov were generally called *tsarevichi* in Russian, the equivalent of the Turkic *sultan*, which in Tatar usage meant the son and direct heir of a khan (in contrast to Ottoman usage). But Tatar princes who ruled in one of the independent khanates retained the title of khan (*tsar'*) when they returned to Kasimov.

⁹ N. I. Shishkin, *Istoriia goroda Kasimova s drevneishikh vremen*, 2nd rev. and exp. ed. (Riazan': N. D. Malashkin, 1891, repr. Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms, 1964).

¹⁰ Khodarkovsky charts these shifting alliances in "Taming the 'Wild Steppe,'" 250–65.

¹¹ Martin discusses this view ("Muscovite Frontier Policy," 169–70), which is reflected in, e.g., Azade-Ayşe Rorlich, *The Volga Tatars: A Profile in National Resilience* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1986), 25.

among the Juchid successor states.¹² More generally, Juchid princes, once lured away from their homelands, often found it difficult to return; a Tatar who entered Muscovite service could no longer take an active part in the politics of his home khanate—unless his participation suited the grand prince.¹³

Relatively little of this sophisticated analysis finds its way into Rakhimzianov's book, the intended audience of which is difficult to determine. The topic seems too rarefied and the historiographical discussion too dense for people who would pick up Trepavlov's *Zolotaia orda*, yet this is not an archivally based study so much as a summary of existing literature. The author, a senior research fellow at the Center for Ethnological Monitoring in the Marjani History Institute at the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Tatarstan, spent a year at Harvard's Davis Center, where his copious footnotes suggest he mastered much of the Western literature. But outside the historiographical introduction, his book draws heavily on a few Russian and Tatar works, most notably Vel'iaminov-Zernov's four volumes and M. G. Khudiakov's history of Kazan.¹⁴ This focus may reflect his book's origins in his candidate's dissertation.¹⁵

Rakhimzianov begins with a discussion of sources. A serious problem for studies of the Juchid ulus and its successor khanates is the almost complete absence of Tatar sources.¹⁶ Most of what we know comes from those who interacted with the Horde, not from the Horde itself. Although some information on the Crimean Tatars survives in Topkapi, the documents produced by the civil bureaucracies in Sarai, Kazan, and elsewhere—even Kasimov, it seems—were lost as a result of war and other disasters. The Russian chronicles, problematic at the best of times, are particularly unreliable in reference to Muscovy's Muslim neighbors.¹⁷ Craig Kennedy has shown how

¹² Martin, "Muscovite Frontier Policy." Martin does not deny that Kasimov served a defensive purpose, but she believes it served other purposes as well.

¹³ Khodarkovsky, "Taming the 'Wild Steppe'"; Kennedy, "The Juchids of Muscovy."

¹⁴ M. G. Khudiakov, *Ocherki po istorii Kazanskogo khanstva* (Kazan: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo, 1923, repr. Kazan: Magarif, 2004).

¹⁵ B. R. Rakhimzianov, "Kasimovskoe tsarstvo: Sotsial'no-politicheskoe razvitiie (1445–1552 gg.)" (Candidate of Historical Sciences diss., Kazan State University, 2001).

¹⁶ Rakhimzianov cites in his bibliography M. A. Usmanov, *Tatarskie istoricheskie istochniki XVII–XVIII vv.* (Kazan: Izdatel'stvo Kazanskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta, 1972); and Usmanov, *Zhalovannye akty Dzhuchieva ulusa XIV–XVI vv.* (Kazan: Izdatel'stvo Kazanskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta, 1979), but he does not make much use of either in his text.

¹⁷ Halperin, *Russia and the Golden Horde*, gives a full account of the chronicles and their shortcomings. Pelenski, *Russia and Kazan*, discusses the ideological concerns that affected chroniclers' views of the Tatars in the mid-16th century. Trepavlov makes a similar point (without crediting Halperin) on 6. Ideology is also a central concern in Matthew P. Romaniello, *The Elusive Empire: Kazan and the Creation of Russia, 1552–1671* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2012), which begins before and extends well after the Kazan conquest.

the diplomatic correspondence between Russian princes and Tatar khans reveals relations of dominance, equality, and subordination that changed over time.¹⁸ For Kasimov, Russian archives yield land documents and descriptions of the town and the fortifications—mostly for the 17th century, when the khanate fell under stricter regulation by Russian military governors.¹⁹ But despite the limits imposed by the sources' one-sidedness, creative use of what has survived can bridge the gap.²⁰ Rakhimzianov does not accomplish this goal—or even attempt to do so.

Kasimovskoe khanstvo divides into three parts, roughly equal in terms of length. The first reviews sources and historiography (8–46); the second discusses the khanate's formation and its socioeconomic and administrative structure (47–93); the third provides a political history of Kasimov's rulers, grouped according to their origins (94–167), followed by a conclusion (168–70). There is an ample bibliography as well as genealogical charts, a chronology, and some lovely illustrations, including reconstructions of what Kasimov may have looked like in its glory days. Rakhimzianov takes a somewhat broader approach than Trepavlov: for example, he describes the religious hierarchy (74–76), which Trepavlov does not mention despite his occasional references to the Horde's conversion to Islam. Despite its virtues, though, Rakhimzianov's study has a “textbook” feel to it—long on description and restatement, short on original ideas. As an introductory guidebook to Kasimov, it works very well. As an independent contribution to the literature, it offers not much more than Trepavlov's *Zolotaia orda*.

These two books also mirror each other in one curious respect. Trepavlov seems intent on asserting that Russia retained its cultural and economic independence under Mongol rule; Rakhimzianov emphasizes Kasimov's right to be considered a khanate (65). But are these points really in dispute? No one has claimed Mongol influence on Russia's religious culture, an area in which the khans had little interest and no credible authority. The same could be said of the many areas of Russian life associated with religious culture (art, architecture, and book production, among others) and of agriculture, another sphere with which the khans did not concern themselves.²¹ Right

¹⁸ Kennedy, “The Juchids of Muscovy,” esp. 46–161.

¹⁹ See, e.g., Shishkin, *Istoriia goroda Kasimova*, 75–78.

²⁰ For one stellar example of the inventive use of sources, if not in reference to Kasimov per se, see Devin deWeese, *Islamization and Native Religion in the Golden Horde: Baba Tükles and Conversion to Islam in Historical and Epic Tradition* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994). Despite its title, the book goes beyond Islamization to explore steppe culture and customs.

²¹ The Mongols did influence artistic life elsewhere. See, e.g., the catalogue of the exhibition held 28 September 2010–2 January 2011 at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York:

after the invasion, Russia suffered from economic decline and a reduced population, but its commerce benefited from the security that accompanied the *pax Mongolica*, however many fees the Juchids' bureaucrats exacted. As the military situation stabilized, the economy revived and the population grew.

Similarly, to the end of the 16th century at least, Kasimov resembled the other khanates in socioeconomic and cultural terms—ruled by Muslim princes under the Hanafi school of Muslim law, with a largely Tatar population, a separate agro-commercial economy, and its own language, government, and religion. Moscow appointed its rulers, denying it the political independence enjoyed by Kazan, Astrakhan, or Crimea, but in other respects Kasimov remained part of the Tatar world.

In sum, these two books chip away at the Russian classroom tradition of subordination to and devastation by the descendants of Chinggis Khan. Although the authors do not break new ground, they do propose an alternative to the myth of the “Mongol–Tatar Yoke,” and that can only be a positive development in the long run.

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