

Favereau, Marie. *The Horde: How the Mongols Changed the World*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press, 2021. 377 pages. Hardcover, \$29.95

It has been years since scholars gained better access to Mongolia, and since geneticists made fantastic claims about Chinggis Khan's progeny. Battlefield reports from Ukraine, moreover, recall the trope that explains Russian brutality as a legacy of Russia's historical vassalage to the Mongols. These factors provide context to *The Horde: How the Mongols Changed the World*, the latest book by French historian Marie Favereau. Her general mandate is to augment and replace "dramatic and reassuringly familiar" narratives of war and conquest with new knowledge of the Golden Horde, one of four Mongol realms to form after the death of Chinggis Khan in 1227 (p. 30). By 1300, the Horde reigned over most of today's western Russia, Ukraine, and Crimea. The Ilkhanids, Chagatayids, and Great Khans dominated other parts of Asia. Europe lay to the west. It was the Horde that subjugated Kievan Rus and invaded Eastern Europe in pursuit of the Qipchaqs, a nomadic enemy from the steppe. Horde power crested in the mid-fourteenth century, then declined in the midst of the Black Death, infighting, and Ming victories against the Great Khans.

Favereau places the Horde at the fulcrum of a trade and communications system that joined Mongols with Russians, Venetians, Byzantines, Mamluks, and others (p. 210-11). As such she argues that the concept "Mongol exchange" better captures the dynamism of that era than *Pax Mongolica*, which underplays internal Mongol conflicts. In the process she challenges stereotypes of the Horde as irrational barbarians, and argues the Horde contributed to, rather than stunted, the political and economic development of Muscovite Russia.

The Horde includes maps, photographic illustrations, a glossary, reference notes, and an appendix. Favereau adapts to incomplete contemporary documentation by using a variety of evidence, including centuries-old texts, coins, arts, and crafts from Mongolia and elsewhere

Favereau marshals more than enough evidence to persuade the reader that Horde elites developed and protected trade on the basis of strategic thinking, geopolitics, and political order. She traces the exchange to Chinggis eldest son Jochi, who suffered questionable parentage and lost his status as firstborn heir, and Jochi's son Batu, who wanted more independence from the Great Khans and needed an autonomous base of power. She also demonstrates that the Horde, after reducing Kiev, helped enrich and interact with Russian nobles in a way that empowered Moscow.

Social scientists should appreciate *The Horde's* methodology. Favereau is passionate, but patient and entrepreneurial with evidence, and does not deny that the Horde excelled at violence and intimidation. Early on she describes Mongol diplomacy as "terrifying and perverse" but stays on point while sifting through episodes of war, slavery, and executions (55). The fact that the Horde predated the modern world does not mean they alone created it. States in that area today, notably Russia and Ukraine, do not fare well on heat maps of democracy, human development, and corruption. Despite the book title, Favereau claims only that the Horde changed their world and avoids more grandiose conclusions. Thick descriptions of nomadic culture and rule over cities also expose the sedentary and urban assumptions behind Weberian definitions of the state and bureaucracy. Readers can draw their own conclusions about the Horde practice of forcing enemies to submit, but not to surrender their religious and other cultural institutions.

Finally, Favereau's style of writing is academic in that she populates the text with methodological notes and assumptions, stereotypes, and arguments her work builds on or refutes. But she also revisits general historical landmarks, and casual and novice readers can further track *The Horde* using the maps, illustrations, and glossary.

In conclusion, *The Horde* is an outstanding study that adds knowledge and balance to Mongol history. Social scientists will benefit as well from its demonstrations of exhaustive and original research, scholarship, and careful treatment of the subject matter.

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