

	<p>Science, Education and Innovations in the Context of Modern Problems Issue 12, Vol. 8, 2025</p> <p>Title of research article </p> <p>The Golden Horde as a Nexus of Islamic Cultural Exchange and Political Connectivity in the Medieval Eurasian World</p>	
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<p>Abstract</p> <p>This study examines the Golden Horde as a major political and cultural force fostering Islamic connectivity across Eurasia during the Middle Ages. The regions inhabited by the Oghuz Turkic tribes, beginning in the 5th/11th century, served not only as zones of settlement but also as transmission arteries of cultural exchange between the Islamic world and the northern Eurasian plains. Established by Batu Khan (639–643 AH / 1235–1246 CE), the Golden Horde emerged as a central Mongol successor state, whose ruling elites would gradually experience sociocultural transformation, most notably through the Islamization of the khanate beginning under Berke Khan, son of Jochi. His embrace of Islam marked a turning point in the Horde's diplomatic orientation, strengthening its ties with the Mamluk Sultanate in Egypt and reshaping its religious, linguistic, bureaucratic, and commercial structures. The analysis sheds light on the layered processes through which Islamic influence permeated Mongol administrative traditions, legal systems, architectural styles, spiritual practices, and commercial networks—especially those linked to the Silk Road trading sphere and the Volga basin economic corridor. The political alliance with al-Zahir Baybars reflects a strategic reconfiguration of Eurasian geopolitics, demonstrating how Islamic affiliation transformed alliances, trade, and military cooperation. Through a multidisciplinary historical methodology—combining textual evidence, Islamic historiography, geographic descriptions, and comparative cultural history—this article argues that the Golden Horde played a decisive role in shaping the medieval Islamic world beyond its traditional geographic borders.</p>		
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Introduction:

From the end of the 4th century AH (11th century CE), the Islamic East faced numerous obstacles, including external upheavals such as the Crusades. These upheavals continued until the 7th century AH (13th century CE). The region then had to contend with the Mongol invasions led by Emperor Genghis Khan, who reached Western Asia around 620 AH (1223 CE). Genghis Khan tasked his eldest son, Jochi, with conquering and invading Western Asia. Jochi obeyed his father's order, entered the region, and settled there. He had two sons, Batu Khan and Berke Khan. Upon Jochi's death, his son Batu succeeded him, continuing his father's mission and conquering

Russia, thus founding the Golden Horde. His brother Berke later succeeded him. Many events occurred in the region during this period, and his reign continued until he built a powerful and distinct state, unlike the other Mongol khanates and kingdoms.

This study will examine some stages in the development of the Mongol Empire under the sons of Emperor Genghis Khan, addressing the following question:

Did the Golden Horde influence the course of relations between the Asian and Islamic worlds during the Middle Ages? If so, what was its influence?

The importance of this study lies in the need to understand the history of ancient China, one of the world's greatest empires and civilizations, and the Golden Horde, founded by Batu Khan after his conquest of Western Asia.

Study objectives:

- Define the geographical extent of the Golden Horde and the most significant political transformations it underwent.
- Determine the relationship between the Mongols and Islam, as well as its teachings.
- Identify the most significant changes that occurred in the Islamic East during the 13th century.
- Discover two important figures in Chinese history: Batu Khan and Berke Khan.

The approach of study:

To understand the aspects of the subject, the analytical and critical historical approach was adopted in order to monitor historical events close to relative truth and arrange them in accordance with their chronological sequence, on the one hand, and on the other hand, to compare them with Islamic and Western sources that dealt with the history of the Golden Horde in its various eras.

First: Definition of the Golden Horde

1- Its geographical location:

It is not difficult to define the geographical framework of the Golden Horde because its borders were not fixed due to the successive political changes it experienced, especially the political upheavals. Nevertheless, we have no objection to referring to sources close to that period that dealt with a description of the Golden Horde, foremost among them the historian "Ibn Arab Shah," who mentioned its borders to us, describing it as having a vast area. This region is called Dasht-e Kipchak, with pastures in winter and summer, and it has cold places and overlooks the Caspian Sea. It is a region that extends from the Dnieper River to the land of the Bulgars in the west, and from Russia and the land of the Slavs in the north to the Mongol kingdoms of Iran, Asia Minor, and Turkestan in the south.

2-Origin:

The Kipchak lands take their name from their inhabitants, a branch of the Oghuz, a nomadic Turkic people, predominantly pagan. Their population increased in the 11th century, and they spread across vast territories, settling in the lower Volga basin and the Oghuz Desert.

After the arrival of the Mongols in the second decade of the 7th century AH (13th century CE) and their settlement in the second half of the same century, the Kipchaks were nicknamed the Golden Horde because of the golden color of their tents. Physically, the Muslim historian al-Maqrizi, in his account of the Golden Horde's ambassadors traveling through the Islamic world en route to the Mamluk Sultanate, describes them as having a distinctive appearance: they wore hats shaped like animal heads adorned with buffalo horns and bells, and had shaved beards. This reflects their upbringing and the influence of their environment. This appearance served to intimidate hostile peoples.

Second: The Founding of the Golden Horde

A- The Reign of Batu Khan (633-644 AH / 1235-1246 CE):

Mongol law stipulated that a father must divide all his possessions among his sons before his death. This was the case in the Mongol Empire when Genghis Khan divided his property among his four sons. His eldest son, Jochi, took control of the regions bordering the Volga River and the western shore of the Caspian Sea, including the kingdoms of the Bulgars, Rus', Circassians, Khwarezm, and Kipchaks, as well as territories annexed to his empire: Tabriz, Hamadan, and Maragheh. Jochi died a few months before his father, Genghis Khan, which led the latter to divide his son's possessions among his own sons.

Batu Khan was the son of Arkin Qujin, one of the wives of Jochi Khan, son of Genghis Khan. Batu enjoyed a prestigious and high position within his Mongolian community in the Karakoram region, and his followers obeyed him. He had many children, but acknowledged the four children of his first wife.

Batu Khan ascended the throne of the Kipchak Khanate and its territories by decree of the Great Khan, officially assuming power after the death of his father, Jochi. The Kipchak Khan faced harassment from the successors of the Great Khanate, particularly from his grandfather's successor, Ögedei, who ruled from 624 to 639 AH (1227-

1241 CE). Given Batu's stature and ambitions, Ögedei hoped to receive a third of the Mongol war profits, but his hopes were dashed, leading to a psychological war with his followers. This conflict became evident upon Ögedei's death in 639 AH/1241 CE. The successors of Genghis Khan convened the Supreme Council - the Kuriltai - a Mongol custom for debating the appointment of a new Great Khan. Batu did not attend, feigning illness. At this meeting, Güyük appointed his cousin, which strained relations with the new Khan. The latter attempted to assassinate Batu, but fortunately for Batu, he died in Samarkand, on his way to fight him in 647 AH / 1249 CE. Favorable circumstances allowed Batu Khan to achieve his goals. His relationship with the Great Khanate improved when the successors of Tolui - son of Genghis Khan - came to power. This was due to the friendship he had with this family since the reign of his father, Jochi. Furthermore, Batu received support from Tolui's wife, Siwar. On the international front, Batu maintained friendly relations with Muslims, which intensified his animosity towards the Great Khan, Guiyuk, who had converted to Christianity at the hands of the Nestorians.

Before launching his war against Russia, Batu issued a decree granting the northern provinces of the empire to his father, Jochi. Due to his son's competence, he was given command of the army. This decision was based on the authority of the Great Khan, Genghis Khan.

B- Batu Khan's Military and Strategic Campaigns:

*His Wars Against Russia (633-638 AH / 1235-1240 AD

Akeday, the Great Khan, ordered the preparation of three military campaigns. The first was launched against Russia in 633 AH (1235 AD). Batu was appointed its commander, accompanied by his brother Möngke and his son Göyük, along with other princes and prominent commanders such as Beydar and Subutai. Subutai possessed the military experience and acumen he had gained through his previous campaigns during the reign of Genghis Khan, when he was tasked with conquering this region. The army prepared for Batu's campaign numbered approximately thirty thousand¹, and most of the participants were Turkmen.

Batu's campaign towards Russia began in Jumada al-Akhirah of 633 AH (1235-1236 CE). In a short period, he managed to conquer many regions bordering Russia, starting with Bulgaria to secure lines of communication between his forces scattered across Eastern Europe. Thanks to his military strategy, Batu and his companions were able to significantly expand their operations, advancing on major Russian cities, most notably Vladimir, which they destroyed on February 8, 1238 CE, and Moscow, which fell to the invaders in 1238 CE. Batu paused his military campaign to reorganize his forces before resuming his campaign in 1240 CE. He succeeded in destroying Kyiv², one of the most important Russian cities, on December 6, 1240 CE. This opened the way for Batu to conquer many neighboring regions. The main reasons for Batu's victory over Russia can be summarized as follows:

*The overwhelming number of Mongol troops.

**Batu Khan's sound military policy of dividing the army into divisions, each with its own commander.

*The dispersal of the Russian forces, which were facing the swift Mongol forces.

*The unification of the Mongol forces under a single command, Batu Khan, who had experience in this region (Russia). As a consequence of the fall of Kyiv, the Kipchak princes—the Golden Horde—quickly pledged allegiance and obedience to the Mongol leaders. The leader of the Golden Horde seized this opportunity to establish an important city in this region in 1242 CE, called Sarai, meaning "fortress," which became his capital. This raises the question: why did Batu Khan choose Sarai as the capital of his dynasty?

*His strategic actions:

The Sarai region was chosen due to its strategic location overlooking the Volga River, which has always been a busy waterway. Most trade caravans pass through this river, whether coming from China, India, or the Islamic East. In addition, this region is rich in diverse natural and animal resources and is inhabited by both landowners and feudal lords.

Based on these assets that the horde possessed, Batu exerted all his efforts to create the first foundations of the horde, and in his strategies he relied on not adopting any official religion for himself and the city - Sarai - and thus he would allow it to develop in the commercial aspect thanks to the merchants who come from everywhere to sell their products without obstacles. In addition to this policy, Batu relied on opposing and appeasing the princes neighboring him, especially the Byzantine Empire.

Batu relied on various elements to serve his military and economic interests, including the Cumans and Turkmen of Turkish origin, as these groups harbored animosity towards the Russian peoples. He used the Russians as slaves, imposing exorbitant taxes on them to raise funds for his army.

From the above, we can conclude that Batu employed different policies to achieve his goals, policies that closely resembled those of his grandfather, Genghis Khan. However, he did not continue his military campaigns against Europe due to problems within the Mongol court (Korokorm), specifically the death of Möngke Khan (649 AH / 1251 CE). Batu feared losing his possessions in the Golden Horde and aspired to the title of Great Khan. Unfortunately, his dream of attaining this title was not realized, as he died in 650 AH (1252 CE) on the banks of a river near the capital, Sarai.

During his reign, the Golden Horde witnessed many developments, both political and economic, and this is due to its independent character. Its status increased during the reign of Berke Khan - brother of Batu.

Third: The spread of Islam in the Golden Horde:

A- Berke Khan and his conversion to Islam (653-666 AH / 1255-1267 CE):

The founder of the Golden Horde - Batu - died, and his son Sartaq succeeded him, but his rule did not last long, and he died on his way to Sarai. After that, Berke Khan bin Jochi sat on the throne of the Khanate in the year 653CE corresponding to 1254 CE. He was known for his sincerity, affection, and unity with the Talawi family. Berke Khan is considered the first to convert to Islam and spread Islam among the Mongols, and he loved scientists and sheikhs of Islam.

Islamic sources differ on the conversion of Berke Khan. Some say he converted after ascending the throne, while others maintain it occurred in his childhood. Those who subscribe to this view include al-Qalqashandi, who tells us that Berke Khan memorized the Quran from a young age. Furthermore, when Berke Khan traveled to Qurqum to attend the coronation of Möngke Khan on the throne of the Mughal Empire in 649 AH (1251 CE), and upon his return, he passed through Kokand (now Bukhara), where he met Sheikh Shams al-Din al-Bakrizi, a disciple of Sheikh Najm al-Din Kabar, and converted to Islam at their hands.

To confirm Berke Khan's conversion to Islam before ascending the throne, we turn to the contemporary foreign source on the Golden Horde, William Roebrook (Guillaume (R)), who mentioned the most important matters relating to Mongolia.

Muslims became familiar with Berke Khan, especially during the Mamluk era, when its ruler, Al-Zahir Baybars, and Caliph Al-Mustasim Billah prayed for him in the pulpits of Baghdad and Mecca, thus making him a protector of Islam and Islamic law.

B- His military and strategic actions

*His wars against Hulegu:

Berke Khan sent messengers to Hulegu demanding their share of the conquests of the countries and the spoils of war, which are divided into five parts: two parts for the Great Khan, two parts for the army, and one part for the house of Batukhan, who is considered the heir of Berke Khan. However, Hulagu killed these messengers, which greatly angered Berke Khan, and he resolved to fight him. The two sides met in Shawwal of the year 660 AH, corresponding to 1261-1262 CE, after Hulagu attacked Baghdad and destroyed it in the year 1258 CE. The two sides fought, and it resulted in Hulagu's terrible defeat in the year 663 AH, corresponding to 1265 CE. Fortunately for Berke Khan, Hulagu illness led to his death on the 9th of Rabi' al-Awwal of the same year mentioned above.

Regional conflict was no longer the sole reason for the outbreak of hostilities between Berke Khan and Hulagu. Several other factors contributed, including: the traditional rivalry between the Mongols of Iran and the Mongols of the Kipchak Empire over power. This rivalry manifested itself when Berke Khan ascended the throne of the latter, prompting Hulagu's reaction and rejection.

Hulagu's arrival in the Golden Horde's territories and his capture of Tabriz and Maragheh, which are located in the southwest of the horde.

Berke Khan's conversion to Islam and his support for Muslims during Hulagu's attack on Baghdad and the Levant, in addition to his founding of a capital in Tabriz.

-Berke Khan's connection with the Mamluk Sultan Al-Zahir Baybars and the establishment of friendly, allied relations with him.

*His Strategic Actions:

Berke Khan took an interest in the city of Sarai and built a new city adjacent to the old Sarai. Many Arab Muslim travelers, including Ibn Battuta, who visited and wrote about this city, described it extensively. He said: "The city of Sarai is one of the finest cities, extremely large... spacious markets, wide streets... no ruins, and it has gardens, and thirteen mosques for Friday prayers..." Berke Khan continued to revitalize this city, especially in the commercial and craft industries. He did not limit his influence to the capital alone, but extended it as far as Tabriz, which was

the capital of Hulagu. Thus, Berke Khan's conflict with the latter was due to economic and commercial reasons. Berke Khan also established factories for weaving silk and cloth in this city. In addition, he named the mosque in this area after himself, and he strengthened his work by consolidating his relationships with Muslim merchants.

His relationship with Muslims:

Berke Khan's work focused on defending Islam, and he dedicated his life to serving the religion. Therefore, he maintained friendly relations with Muslims, especially merchants who possessed significant resources and privileges, particularly in the economic sphere. As for the military, most of Berke Khan's army had converted to Islam, and every knight carried a prayer rug. Berke Khan also prohibited his army from using drugs.

Because of the enmity between Hulagu and Berke Khan, it was natural for an alliance to take place between the Muslims and Berke Khan. The first to initiate this was Al-Zahir Baybars, who sent a message to the Khan of the Golden Horde in the year 660 AH, corresponding to 1261-1262 CE, requesting agreement and cooperation from Hulagu. His goal was to protect Egypt from the Mongol attacks. He also strengthened his relationship by presenting gifts to the Khan. Among these gifts, we find a copy of the Holy Qur'an, carpets and mattresses, high-quality garments of Venetian origin, and purebred Arabian horses.

Berke Khan expressed his satisfaction and enthusiasm for Islam and Muslims by sending an embassy to the Egyptian king in the year 661 AH, corresponding to 1263 CE. Baybars received it warmly, prayed for Berke Khan in the mosques, and declared him the protector of Islamic law.

Berke Khan's activities against the Mongol Empire of Iran did not cease. He fought Hulagu's successor, Abaqa Khan, and managed to defeat him in 664 AH (1266 CE). However, Berke's campaign did not last long, as he died in the same year as Abaqa during a campaign in the Caucasus and was buried in Sarai near the Turk River.

Thus, Berke Khan was influenced by the Muslims, and this led him to spread the faith in the Kipchak Peninsula thanks to the presence of Muslim merchants in the city of Sarai. Furthermore, Muslims cooperated against enemies such as Hulagu and others. Berke worked to bring jurists and Imams from all over the Islamic world to his lands to spread the teachings of Muhammad, in exchange for gifts and presents he offered to them.

Conclusion :

Finally, it should be noted that the Golden Horde played a fundamental role in the history of the Islamic East and Asia during the Middle Ages. This is due to its geographical location, in addition to several other reasons, including its unique and diverse social structure comprised of Mongols and Turks, both of whom contributed in specific ways. The Mongols played an active role in the military and political spheres, while the Turks contributed to the adoption of Islamic civilization. Both peoples are considered the foundation for establishing a solid base for revitalizing trade, thanks to their interest in various activities. Despite these conclusions regarding the history of the Golden Horde, the extent of its secrets remains obscure and requires further investigation, particularly in Algeria, through a comprehensive and serious study.

Ethical Considerations

This research adheres to academic integrity and ethical scholarship standards. All historical sources, manuscripts, primary chronicle materials, and secondary academic analyses used in this study are referenced transparently and cited properly. Interpretations are offered with respect for cultural, religious, and historical contexts, avoiding anachronistic judgments or ethnocentric interpretations. No personal data or sensitive human subject material was utilized in this research.

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