

# *The Mongol Conquest and the National Construction in Russia*

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**Abstract:** The paper aims to examine the relationship of the Mongol Conquest and national construction. Over hundreds of years, national construction and nationalism included elements which were originated to medieval time. In the 13th century, a storm of Mongol swept the whole continent. It is evident that Mongol made great effect on the west and east Asia. The paper first introduces the situation of the Mongol conquest. In spite of bloody massacre, some constructive regimes or patterns were influential in China, Russia and the Islam world. The paper takes the example of Russia and discusses different perspectives on the effect of Mongols. The example illustrates the diverse views on Mongol. These views contain aspects in economy, geopolitics, regime and so forth. Via comparing different views and angles, the paper summarizes negative and positive opinions in historiography and criticizes extreme perspectives. Some regimes or cultures could be controversial because geopolitics and domestic traditions also make a difference. Ultimately, the study proposes that it is significant to keep a cautious attitude to the history of the Mongol Conquest and the work in pursuit of facts continues. How to perceive Mongol conquest should be cautious and it could prevent dropping into aggressive nationalism.

**Keywords:** Mongol Conquest, Russia, nation, China

## 1. Introduction

Looking back to the 19th century, nationalism was prevailing in Europe. The history of the Mongol Conquest was earlier than six hundred years in the medieval time. However, when it comes to national construction, it is hard to ignore cultures, languages, territories, politics and so forth in the past. For Eurasia, it is inevitable to detour the problem of the nomadism. In the 13th century, the Mongol Conquest made vital effects on the whole Eurasia, no matter in terms of the conquest or the governing that followed.

However, with the nationalist development in the 19th century in Europe, the attitude towards the Mongol period was complex and controversial. It is no doubt that the massacre and devastation that had occurred during the conquest invoked opposing sentiments. However, the mainstream always emphasizes on the influence of the conquest, which refers to that the nomad was too primitive to develop the occupied regions [1]. There was a significant obstacle related to different languages which the historian had to overcome. Research on the Mongol presented a tendency of regional acknowledge. During the war, Mongols brought massacre and devastation to the continent. On the other hand, it also promoted the building of regime, trade and military. How to perceive the

special time or what kind of value we should hold can be of diversity but the decision should be cautious. The article will illustrate the problem via hold the example of Russia.

## 2. Mongol World Empire and Perspectives

Mongol conquest in history lasted several decades. It can be analyzed from three periods. The first is the time when Chingis Khan led empire. He was seen a hero who united tribes across the steppe [2]. Strong will, cleverness and bravery converged to him meanwhile he was the governor without mercy. Mongol invasion ended in 1227 with the death of Chingis Khan. His sons continued his career and gradually occupied Qin Dynasty in the north China. They attacked the area from the steppe to east Europe. A series of battles led to the loss of population and economy. In 1241, Batu (the grandson of Chingis Khan) and Baidar (a Mongol general) invaded Hungary and Poland and succeed [3]. In 1243, Batu constructed Golden Horde. The second time of the conquest was over. The third attack was mainly focus on China and Islam world. In 1279, the whole China was occupied and Mongol Empire culminated at that time. During the period of conquest, the large empire was divided into four parts. The empire fell down for its instability and small population.

First, it is necessary to introduce the concept 'the Mongol World Empire'. The concept was proposed by John Andrew Boyle in 1970s [4]. It was amazing at that time and evoked wide debates. Owen Lattimore supported the view and further pointed that the Mongol conquest can be the line dividing the history into pre-modern time and modern time [5]. Apparently, the notion of modernity made sense. Another historian Arthur Waldron who was deeply doing research in the history of East Asia supported the view in the preface of *The Mongol Period* [6]. The books were influenced by the magnificent concept; thus, the latter promoted the part of Mongol in *A Global History* by L. S. Stavrianos. Evidently, these books and perspectives have emphasized the global vision.

However, it was not fitting to research details considerably. Global vision and magnificent view must be based on the research on the regional and departmental analysis. The historian Thomas Allsen was emphasized. He wrote a series literature of Mongols related to politics, culture, finance and so forth. His book focused on the political construction of the Mongol empire [7]. The second book was published in 1997 relating the Islam goods in the trade line. It was a good vision to perceive the economy of the empire. Other important literatures on the relationship between the Mongol and Christendom was *The Mongols*, *The Mongol and the West*. *The Mongols* was finished by David Morgan. The book focuses on the region of frontier in Europe, and *The Mongol and the West* made fully use of materials especially in East Europe. These two books are of great value to interpret the interplay between Europe and Mongol empire.

## 3. The Example of Russian National Construction

The national construction of Russia was an example influenced by Mongol. In the 13th century, the army of Mongol defeated Russian and conquered Vladimir. Besides, Mongols bet Cumans during the war deployed them as pioneers. Then a large devastation ensued. After the separation of Mongols, Russian was under the control of Golden Horde. It lasted for hundreds of years. In 1380, the victory of the battle Kulicovo broke the myth of the undefeatable army of Golden Horde.

After the independence of Russia, some historians discussed the relation of the Russia and Mongol. Author Sergei Soloviev proposed the concept 'Tatar Yoke' ('Tatar' was the name of Mongol in Russia) [8]. The concept aimed to express the negative effect of Mongol. In the 13th, Mongol Conquest led to devastation of the territory. Mongols killed a large amount of people just keeping artisans for the military technique. Some historians thought Mongols cut down the relation between Russia and Europe. They thought Russia can follow the trace to The Renaissance. It seems that Mongol retardant proceed to modernity for Russia. It will be conflicted to the point by Owen

Lattimore. During the time of Golden Horde, Grand Duchy of Moscow developed and got independence. But at first, Grand Duchy of Moscow had to depend on Golden Horde. Some historians thought the control of Mongol stopped the development for Russia because it was difficult to follow the level of West Europe. Some non-Russian Historians reckoned the tyranny and violence of the Russia could be originated to Mongol period [9]. However, some element in national construction of Russia was affected by Mongols. Political construction of Russia can be originated to the structure of Mongol political system.

Meanwhile, it was reported the military technique, especially about the art of cavalries, was influenced by Mongols. But it is still to be justified. In the 20th century, the interpretation on the Mongol's positive effects were emphasized. Historian George Vernadsky narrated some positive contents left by Mongols such as manage structure, military organization, revenue system and language. We can hold a few examples. The word 'denga' in Russian means the coin. It has the same meaning as Mongolian words, dengi. And the Russian word 'iarlyk' was from the Mongolian, meaning the approval from Khan. Besides, Mongol prompted Russian to expand eastward as it cut down the relation to the West [10]. But it is still controversy, for its content being objected. Because it was affected by Eurasianism.

However, Vernadsky was not entirely trapped into the theory [11]. His experience made him contacting to Eurasianism but as the age increased, he began to get out of the theory and he also admitted the ruins and negative effect from Mongol. He thought autocratic authority and serfdom became the outcome of opposing to Mongol [10], which was suspected because it cannot place the exploitability of Mongol aside. What he has emphasized would be the importance by Mongols. In all, focusing on the devastation and ruins is extreme because it is easy to express the enmity towards Mongol but the interpretation of the positive effect should get off the theory which was applied in another extreme way. What should be the direction is to pursuit the fact as closely as possible.

#### 4. Suggestions

The perception of Mongol conquest was of complexity. The particularity of Mongol would be referred. As is known, Mongol conquest spread the whole Eurasia within one hundred years. The expansion of territory and separation of the empire ensued after military actions. In a short time, countries suffered massacre and redevelopment, despite the effect of Mongol still. Defect of stability made the situation not clear. The diversity of the language is also the obstacle. The comparison and analysis among primary materials in different language is necessary. Translation and discussion were still on the way.

As for the historical analysis, geopolitics make a great difference. The location of the steppe made the geopolitics more complicated. Especially for the frontier between Christendom and Russia. Mongol broke the geopolitical interaction and the interaction between Russia and Christendom can justify. Thus, some elements promoting national construction can be analyzed in geopolitical way or both of Mongol and geopolitics.

Nowadays some people would treat Mongol empire as the origin of all the incidents. From the book written by Timothy May, *The Mongol Conquest in the World History*, we can find the fact above in the preface. These persons thought Cold War and the creation of Soviet Union can be originated to Mongol period [12]. But it is evidently ridiculous. What we should realize, privately thinking, is the sense of border when doing some research related to Mongol.

#### 5. Conclusion

For the perception of Mongol, the global vision is necessary but the vision is not sole. Reginal research is the basis of the global cognition and regional historical writing can be influenced by the

global vision. The example of Russia illustrates that it will be contrary when the stands were different. The global vision is hard to focus on the fate of the country under Mongol shadow. Therefore, it is still on the way of connecting regional materials. When relating Mongol to the national construction, the global vision could help emphasize the positive or modern (compared to the medieval time) elements brought by Mongols. Although the fact was bloody but it has existed and made a difference on the history construction of the nation.

However, some regime or culture can be controversial because geopolitics or domestic tradition also make sense. Generally speaking, for global history, Mongol was predominated at that time. While for the effect on national construction, Mongol conquest was significant but it cannot displace the element on geopolitics and vital domestic tradition. How to perceive Mongol conquest should be cautious and it could prevent dropping into aggressive nationalism.

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