

Catholic Missionary Sources on the Everyday Life of the Golden Horde Nomads and Their Diplomatic Relations with the West (first half of the 14th century)

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Khan Uzbek's reign (1313–41) – which is considered by modern scholars as the heyday of the Golden Horde – is abundantly elucidated by numerous Oriental (Mamluk and Persian) sources that paid attention to the political life of the Golden Horde, its administration and, naturally, to the increased influence of Islam in the Jochid ulus. In turn, the author of this paper will pay attention to Latin sources compiled by Catholic missionaries in the Golden Horde.

These sources whose content is still known only to a narrow circle of researchers of the Catholic Apostolate in the Middle Ages, contain very interesting information about daily life in the Golden Horde. Thus, unlike the Oriental chronicles, Latin sources do not pay particular attention to the local political events, but provide interesting information about the life of the “bottom” of the Golden Horde population.

At the same time, Latin sources describe the details of the contact between European missionaries and local people (primarily nomads prevailing in the Golden Horde). They reflect a “European” perception of locals transmitted in words of missionaries – the direct participants of this contact. They describe the missionaries' adaptation to the religious, cultural and linguistic terms of this contact as well as general religious situation in the Golden Horde directly dependent on the will of khan Uzbek who in turn had to take into account the religious expectations of his subjects.

In addition, these sources indicate the existence of close diplomatic relations between Western Europe and the Golden Horde. So, the letters of missionaries sent to the West and containing a description of their, perhaps, exaggerated missionary successes, emphasized the potential consequences of anticipated baptism of the Golden Horde nomads: Golden Horde Tatars had a considerable military potential and could become extremely important allies of Europeans in their fight against Islam. In turn, the Golden Horde khans used established diplomatic relations for own political purposes and tried to use mediation of the Avignon Popes to resolve their relations with the Catholic kingdoms of Hungary and Poland.