

ELITE GROUPS OF OLD RUS' IN THE PERIOD OF CRISIS (13TH AND 14TH CENTURIES)

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The 13th century is traditionally viewed as an important epoch in the history of Rus' (hereinafter the term Rus' refers to historic and cultural unity of Eastern Slavs as the starting point of modern nations – Russia, the Ukraine and Belarus). The pivotal role here was played by the Mongol invasion in the middle of the 13th century which ended the historical period of Old Rus'. Recently in historical studies it has become common to view the 13th and 14th centuries as the times of “the crisis of Medieval Rus'” (the term was suggested by the English researcher John Fennell). It is important to underline that this crisis implies not only a downfall due to a military defeat but also a complete reformatting of the society's life – in the political, social, cultural and other spheres.

One of the most significant scientific issues is the question of transformation the elites underwent under the new conditions. The role of these elites changed in the life of the society. Suddenly they found themselves in an “elites without the empire” situation: the political unity of Old Rus' collapsed, and the elites happened to be included in other political systems. Against this background, we can outline the following set of problems:

- a) Elites in Eastern Slavic principalities, their role in forming new “centers of power” (Moscow and Tver in Russia, principality of Galicia-Volhynia in the Ukraine and others).
- b) Integration of elites of Old Rus' into the political system of the Golden Horde: political, dynastic, church and military aspects.
- c) Elites of Old Rus' in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania: the influence of the political culture of Eastern Slavic population on the Lithuanian ruling elites, establishment of the second (after the Rurikids) dynasty – the Gedeminids – in the Russian lands.
- d) Elites of Russian descent in the neighboring countries: Poland, Hungary, German Livonia, the Balkans.

A specific case of the previous aspect: integration of representatives of the ruling Rurikids dynasty into the power hierarchy of the neighboring states – Prince Rostislav Mikhailovich in the Hungarian Kingdom (1245–1264), Prince Roman Danylovich in the Austrian Duchy (1252–1253) and other.

Several of these problems have been examined in historiography for a long time (1; 2), while others have only been studied in particular aspects (3), certain issues only recently started attracting attention of scholars (4), certain issues appear to be completely new for the discussion (5). On the whole, in historiography there has not been established a common opinion on the transformations of the elites in Old Rus' in that period of the fragmentation of the former unity when new political realities were formed. In the paper, these issues will be analyzed from the middle of the 13th century to the end of the 14th century.