

Agriculture, cattle breeding and trade in the Golden Horde based on data from written sources

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Abstract

This article examines data available from written sources on agriculture, cattle breeding and trade in Ulus Jochi. According to archaeological data, in the Golden Horde, millet was the most widely cultivated crop, followed by rye, wheat, barley, oat and peas. Besides agriculture and cattle breeding, special attention is devoted to examining characteristic features of hunting and fishing. Such trades as salt extraction and the gathering of honey, nuts, grasses and roots are also briefly characterised. Medieval authors clearly noted millet cultivation in the Golden Horde state. Italian and Byzantine merchants bought different kinds of grains from the Golden Horde: namely, wheat, millet and barley, in order of preference. Along with agriculture, cattle breeding was one of the economic bases of the Golden Horde state. It was developed not only in the nomadic economy, in which it served as way of life, but also amongst the settled population. Cattle breeding was carried out for the purpose of obtaining not only meat, but also milk, wool and leather. The Golden Horde exported cattle in large quantities. Hunting was mostly carried out for the purpose of obtaining furs, and had little significance as a source of meat. The furs (which mainly came from the northern regions of the territory) were one of the most important items actively exported by the Golden Horde. Italian merchants imported dried and salted whole fish, as well as cured fillets of fish (primarily sturgeon), and caviar from the Golden Horde. Salt extraction was closely connected with the salting and drying of fish. Wild hive beekeeping was also of some importance. Honey and beeswax were exported by Ulus Jochi, while honey, grasses and roots were gathered for food by the local population. This study will be significant for historians, archaeologists and linguists whose research is in medieval studies.

Keywords

Agriculture, Cattle breeding, The Golden Horde, Trade, Written sources