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PETER ORDYNSKY: A DESCENDANT OF CHINGGIS KHAN CANONIZED BY THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

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Abstract

This article examines the historical and religious transformation of Dair Kaidagul, a descendant of Chinggis Khan's Golden Lineage, into Saint Peter Ordynsky of the Russian Orthodox Church. Born a Jochid prince of the Golden Horde and remembered in Russian tradition as a kinsman of Berke Khan, Dair Kaidagul entered the Orthodox world of Rus' through baptism and was ultimately canonized as Saint Peter. Drawing on Russian historiography, hagiographic tradition, and historical source materials, this study argues that his conversion was not merely an act of personal faith, but part of a broader process through which Mongol imperial legitimacy, Orthodox sanctity, and Russian noble identity became historically intertwined. It demonstrates how a descendant of Chinggis Khan could be transformed into an Orthodox saint and founder of a Russian noble lineage, linking Mongol imperial authority, Russian Orthodoxy, and aristocratic incorporation within a single historical trajectory.

Keywords: *Mongol Empire, Golden Horde, Peter Ordynsky, Berke Khan, Russian Orthodoxy, Boris of Rostov, Chirikov, Bishop Kirill*

Introduction

The canonization of a descendant of Chinggis Khan in the Russian Orthodox Church is one of the most striking episodes in the religious history of the Mongol Empire. That a prince of the Golden Lineage (*Altan Urag*), born into the ruling house of the Golden Horde and related to Berke Khan, could not only convert to Orthodox Christianity but later be canonized and venerated as a Russian saint presents a remarkable case of religious transformation, political accommodation, and cultural integration across the Mongol and Rus' worlds.

Known in Russian ecclesiastical tradition as Saint Peter Ordynsky, this figure occupies a singular place at the intersection of Mongol imperial history and Russian Orthodox memory. Born Dair Kaidagul, a Jochid prince of the house of Orda, he entered the Orthodox world of Rus' through baptism, monastic patronage, and eventual canonization, while his descendants became integrated into the ranks of the Russian nobility under the name Chirikov. His life and afterlife reveal not only the permeability of confessional boundaries in the thirteenth-century Mongol world, but also the capacity of Russian Orthodoxy to absorb, transform, and sanctify a descendant of the Chinggisid imperial line.

This article examines the historical and religious transformation of Dair Kaidagul into Saint Peter Ordynsky on the basis of Russian historiography, hagiographic tradition, and historical source materials. In doing so, it argues that his conversion and canonization were not merely acts of personal faith, but part of a broader process through which Mongol imperial legitimacy, Orthodox sanctity, and Russian noble identity became historically intertwined.

1. From Dair Kaidagul to Peter Ordynsky: Conversion and Identity



Figure 1. Saint Peter Ordynsky.

Saint Peter was a Russian Orthodox saint descended from Chinggis Khan's Golden Lineage (*Altan Urag*), a member of the imperial house that ruled the Mongol Empire and traced its authority to Chinggis Khan himself. Born a prince of the Jochid line of the Golden Horde, he belonged to the ruling elite of the western ulus and was remembered in Russian tradition as a close kinsman—most often a cousin—of Berke Khan (r. 1257–1266), the first ruler of the Golden Horde to adopt Islam.

Upon his conversion to Orthodox Christianity, he received the baptismal name Peter in accordance with ecclesiastical custom and entered Russian historical memory under the name Peter Ordynsky. The epithet *Ordynsky* (“of the Horde”) did not merely indicate geographic provenance, but marked his political identity as a prince of the ruling house of the Golden Horde and signaled his place within the Chinggisid imperial order.

In the language of Russian chronicles, such designations carried clear political meaning: because Russian princes were required to appear before the khan in order to receive confirmation of rank, inheritance, and dynastic legitimacy, these journeys were regularly recorded with phrases such as “he rode to the Horde” or “he went to the Horde.” In this context, the designation *Ordynsky* identified Peter not simply as a foreign noble, but as a representative of the ruling lineage of the Horde itself.

The life of this prince, who would later be canonized as a saint in the Russian Orthodox Church, circulated widely in multiple hagiographic and historical versions. Among these, the earliest and most authoritative is the *Povest' o Petre, tsareviche Ordynskom*¹ (“Tale of Peter, Tsarevich of the Horde”), identified by the eminent Russian historian V. O. Kliuchevsky as the oldest extant recension of his life.² In this account, the prince appears under the name Dair Kaidagul and is described as the son of Orda, elder brother of Berke Khan.

This genealogy places him within the Ordaid branch of the Jochid house and thus among the descendants of Jochi, eldest son of Chinggis Khan. The name *Dair* is Mongolian in origin, meaning “grizzled” or “grey-haired,” and may be compared with names such as Dair Usun attested in *The Secret History of the Mongols*. The second element, *Kaidagul*, likewise appears to be Mongolian, preserving

¹ М. О. Скрипил, “Повесть о Петре, царевиче Ордынском [The Tale of Peter, the Tsarevich of the Horde],” in *История русской литературы [History of Russian Literature]* (Moscow–Leningrad, 1945), 2:10.

² В. О. Ключевский, *Древнерусские жития святых как исторический источник [Old Russian Hagiographies as a Historical Source]* (Moscow, 1871), 38.

the name-forming suffixes *-gul* or *-khul*—as in names such as Borokhul—which further supports the prince’s Mongol origin and confirms the internal consistency of the hagiographic tradition. Taken together, these linguistic and genealogical details strongly suggest that the Russian account preserved a genuine memory of the prince’s Mongol identity, even as it later reframed that identity within an Orthodox saintly narrative.

Dair Kaidagul’s conversion from Tengrism, the ancestral religion of his forefathers in favor of the faith of a conquered people reflects a broader pattern visible among the grandsons and great-grandsons of Chinggis Khan in the thirteenth century. As Mongol rule expanded across Eurasia, members of the Chinggisid line increasingly encountered and, in some cases, adopted the religions of the peoples they governed. Jochi’s son Berke and Chaghadai’s grandson Mubarak Shah, for example, both converted to Islam in the mid-thirteenth century. Dair Kaidagul’s conversion to Orthodoxy belongs to this wider pattern of Chinggisid confessional change, yet it differed from these other cases in important respects. Berke Khan and Mubarak Shah, though they adopted Islam, retained their original names and remained legible within the political and cultural world of Mongol rulership. Dair Kaidagul, by contrast, underwent a more complete symbolic transformation: upon entering the Orthodox faith, he relinquished his birth name, received a Christian one, and was preserved in Russian ecclesiastical memory not as Dair Kaidagul, prince of the Horde, but as Peter Ordynsky. His conversion therefore marked not only a change of faith, but also a reconfiguration of political identity, cultural memory, and historical belonging.

2. A Mongol Prince in Rostov: Kinship, Land, and Integration

According to sources, Dair Kaidagul was baptized by Bishop Kirill of the Cathedral of Rostov (1231–1262). With his baptism, the Mongol prince of the Golden Horde—descended from the Golden Lineage of Chinggis Khan—entered the Orthodox world of Rus’ and emerged in Russian memory as Peter Ordynsky. Yet his conversion did not mark a rupture with his former status so much as its translation into a new political and social setting. In Rostov, Peter did not cease to be a prince of the Horde; rather, he became a Mongol prince integrated into the aristocratic and ecclesiastical order of Rus’.

Among the local elite, Boris, Prince of Rostov, was particularly close to Dair Kaidagul. Their relationship was formalized through a bond of sworn brotherhood according to Mongol custom: in the cathedral of Rostov, the two men exchanged vows of *anda*, the ritual oath of political and personal fraternity. That this ceremony took place within the principal church of Rostov and was personally officiated by Bishop Kirill is especially revealing. It suggests not only Peter’s entry into the Orthodox world, but also the accommodation of Mongol political custom within the ceremonial and ecclesiastical space of Rus’. The alliance between the two men was thus not merely personal, but institutional, binding Mongol princely authority and Russian aristocratic power within a shared framework of ritual legitimacy.

This alliance was soon reinforced through marriage. Peter Ordynsky married a female relative of Prince Boris and thereby entered the Rostov princely household as an affinal kinsman, while also founding the Chirikov lineage, one of the distinguished noble families of Russia. The name *Chirikov* derives from the Mongolian word *čerig* / *chirik*, meaning “soldier,” “warrior,” or “companion.” Its frequent appearance—more than one hundred times—in *The Secret History of the Mongols* suggests that it was widely used in the thirteenth century and likely served as the basis for personal names. Names such as *Čerig* also appear in sources including the *Jāmi‘ al-Tawārīkh* and the *Mu‘izz al-Ansāb*. The *Jāmi‘ al-Tawārīkh*, for example, notes that “the fifth son of Jochi Khan was called Shiban; the fifth son of Shiban was called Chirik [Čerig].”³ Names such as *Amir Chirik*, *Chirik Yarguchi*, and *Chirik-Timur* likewise appear repeatedly in the *Mu‘izz al-Ansāb*.⁴ Taken together, these examples strongly indicate

³ Rashid al-Din, *Сборник летописей [Compendium of Chronicles]*, vol. 2, ed. I. P. Petrushevsky (Moscow–Leningrad, 1960), 74.

⁴ “Му‘изз ал-Ансаб [Glorifying the Genealogies],” in *История Казахстана в персидских источниках [History of Kazakhstan in Persian Sources]* (Dayk-Press, 2006), 3:333.

the Mongolian origin of the Chirikov lineage and preserve in its very name the memory of Peter's steppe aristocratic inheritance.

Peter's integration into Rostov was reinforced not only through kinship, but also through land. He acquired landed property from the Prince of Rostov and established himself as a major estate-holder, yet this transaction must be understood within the wider political framework of Jochid sovereignty.⁵ At the time, ultimate authority over the governance and ownership of Rus' lands remained vested in Berke Khan and the ruling house of the Golden Horde.⁶ It is therefore likely that the transfer of this estate was made under the authority of Berke Khan's decree, granting Peter hereditary rights of possession. Documentary evidence from a sixteenth-century legal dispute, preserved in the Russian State Archive of Early Documents, confirms that the Chirikov lineage continued to hold these lands hereditarily by decree of the khans of the Golden Horde.⁷ Peter's landed authority in Rostov was thus not merely local, but rested on the legal and political sanction of Mongol imperial power.

This dual legal identity became especially clear in a later land dispute between the descendants of Prince Boris and those of Peter Chirikov. When the descendants of Boris sought adjudication through the courts of the Russian princes, Peter Chirikov's heirs—conscious of their Chinggisid lineage—insisted that the matter be judged according to Mongol law. The dispute arose when the Rostov princely line attempted to seize lands belonging to the church founded by Peter Ordynsky. In response, Peter's grandson appealed to Mongol judges, who reviewed the case, protected the church lands from encroachment, and ruled in favor of the khan's kin. The matter was settled when the khan of the Golden Horde issued a charter bearing the red seal (*al tamgatai bichig*), thereby confirming the Chirikov lineage's hereditary legal claim.⁸ Even in Rostov, and even generations after Peter's conversion, Mongol law remained a living source of political authority and legal legitimacy.

According to V. O. Kliuchevsky, Peter enclosed the boundaries of his estate by raising embankments in the Mongol manner, marking both the physical and symbolic imprint of steppe aristocratic practice upon the Rostov landscape.⁹ In this way, Peter Ordynsky became one of the major landholders of Rostov, and his domain extended to Lake Nero. Yet his integration into Rus' did not require the abandonment of Mongol aristocratic life. Written sources note that he built a residence on his estate and made it his permanent seat, while continuing to preserve elements of Mongol noble custom, including hunting in the steppe manner. By his composure, noble bearing, and cultivated restraint, Peter Chirikov was remembered as distinct even among the local Russian aristocracy.

It is particularly significant that Prince Boris gave Peter one of his own female relatives in marriage, thereby making the Mongol prince his son-in-law—an exceptional occurrence in relations with a member of Chinggis Khan's Golden Lineage. For the noble elites of conquered lands, marriage into the Chinggisid line offered more than kinship: it provided access to political favor, economic privilege, elevated social standing, and the durable advantages of proximity to imperial power. In this sense, when Peter settled in Rostov the Great, Boris did not merely receive a converted foreign prince; he entered into kinship with a member of the ruling elite of the Golden Horde. Peter's integration into Rostov was therefore not a story of assimilation alone, but of negotiated incorporation—through kinship, land, and law—into the political and social order of Rus'.

3. Berke Khan, Religious Policy, and the Orthodox Question

Scholars differ on the date of Dair Kaidagul's conversion to the Russian faith in Rostov. Some place the event as early as 1253, while others date it to around 1259–1260. The latter chronology appears more plausible, not only because it aligns more closely with the hagiographic tradition, but also because

⁵ Skripil, "Повесть о Петре, царевиче Ордынском [The Tale of Peter, the Tsarevich of the Horde]," 351.

⁶ S. Tsolmon, *Чингис хааны эзэнт гүрэн [The Mongol Empire of Chinggis Khan]*, ed. Ts. Tserendorj (Ulaanbaatar, 2012), 15.

⁷ G. Lenhoff, "К истории Петра, царевича Ордынского и его Ростовской вотчины [On the History of Peter, the Tsarevich of the Horde, and His Rostov Estate]," in *Средневековая Русь [Medieval Rus']* (Idrik, 2020), 99.

⁸ Lenhoff, "К истории Петра, царевича Ордынского и его Ростовской вотчины [On the History of Peter, the Tsarevich of the Horde, and His Rostov Estate]," 99.

⁹ Klyuchevsky, *Древнерусские жития святых как исторический источник [Old Russian Hagiographies as a Historical Source]*, 43.

it corresponds to the broader ecclesiastical and political conditions of Berke Khan's reign. Dair Kaidagul's conversion can only be understood within the wider religious landscape of the Golden Horde and the confessional policy pursued under Berke Khan.

By the mid-thirteenth century, the Golden Horde had emerged not merely as a military successor state of the Mongol Empire, but as a major political and religious center in its own right. In Sarai, the capital of the Golden Horde, as in Qaraqorum before it, institutions of multiple faiths were established and permitted to operate openly. Mosques, Christian churches, and other religious foundations functioned side by side under the protection of the khan's authority. Among them was a Russian Orthodox church, established in Sarai in 1261.¹⁰ For more than 130 years, this church served not only as a place of worship for Orthodox Christians residing in or passing through the Horde, but also as a center of literacy, education, social welfare, and ecclesiastical administration, exerting a sustained influence on Russian religious and intellectual life. Its existence demonstrates that Orthodox Christianity was not merely tolerated in the Golden Horde but institutionally accommodated within its imperial order.

At first glance, the establishment of an Orthodox church in Sarai under Berke Khan in 1261 may appear paradoxical. Berke is remembered as the first ruler of the Golden Horde to embrace Islam and to promote its expansion within his dominions. Yet his support for Islamic institutions did not entail the suppression of other faiths. Some scholars have interpreted this as evidence of political calculation or hidden motive. Such readings, however, risk overstating the contradiction. Berke Khan's confessional policy was not an exception to Mongol imperial practice, but a continuation of it. His support for Islam unfolded within the broader religious framework inherited from the Great Khans, in which the promotion of one faith did not require the exclusion of others.

This principle of imperial religious pluralism had been embedded in Mongol statecraft since the reign of Chinggis Khan and was codified in the *Yasa*, where it was elevated to the level of state doctrine and institutionalized across the Mongol Empire. Under this system, all religions were accorded equal standing before the state, and religious personnel of every confession—priests, monks, shamans, female ritual specialists, and ascetics—were exempted from taxation, labor obligations, and many forms of state service. The guiding principle of Mongol religious policy rested on the idea that each people should worship its own god and pray for the health of the Great Khan. Although the Mongol court might favor individual confessions at different moments, such patronage did not negate the broader legal principle of confessional parity. In this respect, Berke Khan's support for Islamic reform did not constitute a departure from Mongol precedent. Rather, his simultaneous patronage of Islamic and Orthodox institutions reflects the durability of Mongol imperial religious governance, in which confessional plurality was not a contradiction, but a governing norm.

On this matter, the Ilkhanid historian 'Atā Malik Juvaynī (1226–1283) wrote:

“They [the khans] do not interfere with any religion or creed—indeed, how could one say that they interfere? On the contrary, they support them. As proof of this stands the saying of Muḥammad: ‘Verily, God strengthens His religion through a people without possessions.’ They exempted the most learned men of every religion from all duties, taxes, and levies; they likewise exempted their sacred property, charitable endowments, and the peasants and cultivators attached to them. No one was permitted to insult them, especially the imams of the religion of Muḥammad.”¹¹

The Russian Orthodox church in Sarai was headed successively by nine bishops, yet in ecclesiastical terms it remained under the jurisdiction of Bishop Kirill of Rostov the Great (1242–1281). This administrative connection is significant, for it provides the clearest institutional link between Sarai and Rostov in the period of Dair Kaidagul's conversion. Kirill's authority extended beyond Rostov into

¹⁰ Ts. Enkhchimeg, “Монгол хаад Загалмайтны шашны харилцааг зохицуулсан нь: Үнэн Алдартны шашны жишээн дээр [How Mongol Khans Regulated Relations with Christianity: The Example of the Orthodox Church],” *Studia Historica* 43, no. 10 (2015): 132.

¹¹ Ata-Malik Juvaini, *Чингисхан: История Завоевателя мира [Chinggis Khan: History of the World Conqueror]*, trans. E. E. Kharitonova (Izdatel'skiy dom Magistr-Press, 2004), 11.

the Orthodox communities of the Horde, and his pastoral responsibilities required repeated travel between Rus' and Sarai. In this context, the hagiographic account that places Dair Kaidagul in contact with Kirill during one of the bishop's visits becomes considerably more plausible.

According to the *Povest'*, it was during one such journey, around 1259–1260, that Dair Kaidagul came under the influence of Kirill's preaching and followed him back to Rostov the Great, where he accepted baptism and entered the Orthodox faith. Read in isolation, this episode may appear as a conventional hagiographic motif. Read within the wider framework of Berke Khan's religious policy, however, it becomes historically intelligible. Dair Kaidagul's conversion was not an anomaly born of private devotion alone, but a development made possible by the institutional openness, ecclesiastical mobility, and confessional pluralism of the Golden Horde under Berke Khan.

4. Vision, Monastery, and Canonization

The transformation of Peter Ordynsky from converted Mongol prince to Orthodox saint was neither immediate nor automatic. It unfolded through a gradual process of sacralization in which vision, monastic patronage, local memory, and ecclesiastical recognition together shaped the foundations of his cult. If baptism marked Dair Kaidagul's entry into the Orthodox world, it was the foundation of a sacred institution and the subsequent development of his cult that secured his place within Russian Orthodox memory.

According to the hagiographic tradition, one day while resting on the shore of Lake Nero after a falcon hunt, Peter Ordynsky received a vision of the apostles Peter and Paul, who commanded him to build a church on that very spot. In response, he founded a Russian Orthodox church on the shore of Lake Nero. One version of the account further relates that Berke Khan, his kinsman in the Golden Horde, sent “a cart filled with white silver” to support its construction. Whether read as miracle narrative, dynastic memory, or symbolic legitimation, the episode is significant in that it places the origin of Peter's sanctity at the intersection of vision, patronage, and sacred foundation. It also preserves a striking image: the conversion of a Mongol prince is not completed at baptism, but materially realized in the founding of an Orthodox religious institution. The enduring significance of this episode is reflected in its later visual commemoration in the Archangel Cathedral of the Moscow Kremlin, where it was depicted in mural form under the title “The Dream of Peter, Prince of the Horde.”



Figure 2. A depiction of “The Dream of Peter, Prince of the Horde”

The church founded by Peter stood at an important point along the waterways of Rostov and occupied a strategically significant commercial location. Situated on the shore of Lake Nero—an area rich in fish and linked to local trade networks—it was not only a religious foundation, but also embedded in the economic life of the region. From the thirteenth century onward, the site became associated with regular fishing for trade, suggesting that Peter's church was integrated into both the spiritual and material landscape of Rostov. This convergence of sacred foundation and economic geography helps explain the durability of the institution he established.

Over time, the church founded by the prince came to be known as Peter's Church and later as the Monastery of St. Peter (*Petrov Monastery*). What began as the foundation of a newly converted Mongol prince developed into an enduring monastic institution and one of the notable monuments of early

Russian religious architecture. Though expanded and rebuilt across the centuries, the monastery continues to bear Peter's name and remains active to the present day. Located near Rostov in present-day Yaroslavl Oblast, on the shore of Lake Nero at the very site where it was first established, it preserves the physical setting in which Peter's memory was first anchored in sacred space.



Figure 3. Present-day Monastery of St. Peter in Yaroslavl Oblast.

After the death of his wife, Peter Ordynsky took monastic vows at the church he had founded and entered the monastic life. In this final stage of his transformation, the former Mongol prince of the Golden Horde became not merely a baptized Christian nobleman, but an Orthodox monk. He died in 1290, remembered not as Dair Kaidagul of the Golden Horde, but as the monk Peter. This transition from prince to monk was crucial to the later formation of his saintly image, for it recast his life not simply as one of conversion, but of renunciation, humility, and Orthodox piety.

The veneration of Peter began soon after his death, likely in the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century. In its earliest phase, memory of his life appears to have circulated orally, preserved through local devotion and monastic remembrance before later being committed to writing in hagiographic form. This gradual movement from lived memory to written saintly narrative was essential to the making of Peter's cult. His sanctity was not created in a single moment, but assembled over generations through ritual remembrance, oral transmission, and monastic preservation.

Formal canonization came much later. In 1547, two hundred and fifty-seven years after his death, a Great Council of the highest hierarchs of the Russian Orthodox Church canonized Peter as a saint of all Rus'.¹² Since that time, the feast day of Saint Peter has been observed annually on 13 July, and his liturgical commemoration continues to the present day. His canonization marked the final ecclesiastical recognition of a cult that had already long existed in local and monastic practice.

Thus Dair Kaidagul, son of Orda and grandson of Jochi, was transformed into Peter Ordynsky—a Christian prince—and was ultimately canonized and venerated as Saint Peter in the Russian Orthodox Church. His conversion marked more than a personal act of faith: it signaled the entry of a Chinggisid prince of the Jochid house into the religious and political world of Rus'. In Russian ecclesiastical memory, Peter was remembered not simply as a baptized nobleman, but as a kinsman of Berke Khan and a descendant of Chinggis Khan, making his conversion both a spiritual triumph for Russian Orthodoxy and a political one for the Russian elite. By becoming the son-in-law of an old Russian aristocratic house and the founder of the noble Chirikov lineage, Peter Ordynsky came to embody a living link between Russian Orthodoxy and Mongol imperial authority. This significance was sharpened by Berke Khan's own conversion to Islam and his alliance with Islamic powers such as the Mamluk Sultanate, circumstances that gave the conversion of his Chinggisid kinsman added political and confessional weight.

This development, in turn, raises the broader question of why members of the Golden Lineage adopted other faiths at all. As stated in the previous section, from the time of Chinggis Khan, the Mongol rulers pursued a policy of religious tolerance toward other confessions. Governing the largest contiguous land empire in history—one inhabited by many peoples and adherents of the world's major religions, alongside numerous other beliefs—required the Mongol khans to develop a sophisticated religious policy. The essence of that policy lay in their ability to bring diverse faiths under a single imperial order,

¹² *The Russian Orthodox Church: Orthodox Encyclopedia*, ed. His Holiness Patriarch Alexy II of Moscow and All Rus' (Moscow, 2000), 349–50.

to ensure their coexistence, and to legally guarantee the free practice of their respective rites. As a result, the Mongol imperial order developed a political culture in which multiple religions could coexist under a single sovereign authority, each protected so long as it did not challenge the authority of the khan.

It was within this imperial framework that figures such as Dair Kaidagul could cross confessional boundaries without ceasing to be politically legible. His conversion to Orthodoxy was exceptional, but not anomalous. Like other descendants of Jochi, Chaghadai, and Ogedei who adopted the religions of the worlds they governed, Dair Kaidagul's conversion emerged from the religious flexibility built into Mongol imperial rule. What distinguished his case was not that a Chinggisid changed faith, but that his conversion was preserved, institutionalized, and ultimately sanctified within the historical memory of Russian Orthodox

5. The Chirikov Lineage: Noble Memory and Political Afterlife

Among the Russian principalities, Rostov the Great maintained one of the closest and most durable relationships with the Golden Horde, and it was within this political environment that the Chirikov lineage emerged and endured. As A. N. Nasonov observed in his foundational study of Golden Horde policy toward Rus', the princes of Rostov increasingly came to fulfill the role of the Mongol khans' "most loyal servants,"¹³ a pattern embodied above all by Boris (1231–1277) and his brother Gleb (1237–1278) Vasilkovich. Their repeated journeys to the Horde, regular receipt of khanal favor, and strategic marriage alliances reveal that Rostov's relationship with the Jochid court was not episodic, but structural. As V. Rudakov notes,

"Boris traveled to the Horde seven times and died there. On nearly every occasion he was accompanied by his brother Gleb, Prince of Beloozero, who likewise 'married while in the Horde.' Each time the brothers returned home, they came back having received 'great honor' from the khan of the Horde... At that time, such great honor had become an established political norm in relations between princes and lords."¹⁴

These ties were reinforced through marriage. Russian nobles who became affinal kin to women of Chinggis Khan's Golden Lineage were known as *gürgen*—the Mongolian term for "son-in-law"—and among these imperial sons-in-law were not a few nobles of Russian origin, including prominent elites from Rostov. By virtue of becoming an affinal polity (*kürgen ulus*), Rostov secured unusual political favor within the Mongol imperial order. It was spared the worst devastation of Batu Khan's conquest, avoided repeated punitive campaigns, and remained one of the wealthiest cities in Rus' until its eventual subordination to Moscow.

By the late fourteenth century, Rostov and its surrounding region generated revenues exceeding those of Vladimir and Moscow combined, while reliably paying the *Ordynskii vykhod* owed to the Horde. When Gleb Vasilkovich married a granddaughter of Batu Khan in 1257, the Mongol princess was baptized into Orthodoxy under the name Feodora. Likewise, Konstantin (1257–1307), son of Boris Vasilkovich, married twice into the Golden Horde elite, first an unnamed princess following a campaign in the Caucasus and second a daughter of Mongol noble Qutluq - further embedding the Rostov princely house within the kinship networks of the Jochids.

Yet these marriages of Russian princes into the Golden Lineage differed in important ways from the union of Dair Kaidagul and the Rostov house. Russian princes became imperial sons-in-law by marrying Chinggisid women; Dair Kaidagul, by contrast, entered the Rostov dynasty from the opposite direction, marrying into a Russian princely household while remaining himself a Chinggisid prince. The significance of this union lies not simply in the marriage itself, but in its dynastic afterlife: from it emerged the Chirikov lineage, one of the oldest and most distinguished noble houses of Russia.

¹³ A. N. Nasonov, *Монголы и Русь: история татарской политики на Руси [The Mongols and Rus': The History of Tatar Policy in Rus']* (Moscow–Leningrad, 1940), 64.

¹⁴ V. Rudakov, "Друг дьявола, внук святого: Борис и Глеб XIII века [Friend of the Devil, Grandson of a Saint: Boris and Gleb in the 13th Century]," *Родина [Motherland]*, no. 1 (2015).



Figure 4. Coat of Arms of the Old Russian Noble Chirikov Lineage.

The genealogy of the Chirikov lineage was formally entered into the Muscovite genealogical rolls in the 1680s, securing its place within the recognized noble memory of the Russian state. More than one hundred named members of the lineage appear in archival records, and from the mid-thirteenth century until the death of its last known representative, Grigorii Osipovich Chirikov, in 1936, the family endured for nearly seven centuries.

Across this long political afterlife, the Chirikovs rose steadily from the noble house of a minor regional principality to the upper ranks of Muscovite and imperial service. They served in high civil and military office, accumulated landed wealth, forged advantageous marriage alliances with powerful noble families such as the Sokovnin, Rtishchev, and Miloslavskii, and secured legal and political protection under the expanding Russian state.

By the seventeenth century, the lineage had reached the height of its prominence, and under the Romanovs its members continued to serve at court in positions of considerable authority, even securing two seats in the Russian State Duma. Among the most prominent members were Andrei Ivanovich Chirikov and his brother Il'ia Ivanovich Chirikov, both of whom rose to high office; during the reigns of Alexis of Russia (1645-1676) and Feodor III of Russia (1676-1682). Andrei Chirikov held for many years the prestigious office responsible for receiving foreign envoys, conducting negotiations, and overseeing state ceremonial.¹⁵ In this sense, the Chirikov lineage was not merely the genealogical legacy of Peter Ordynsky's conversion and marriage, but the long political afterlife of a Chinggisid line absorbed into the Russian noble order.

In sum, the Chirikov lineage founded by Prince Peter flourished and reached its height in the seventeenth century. Rising from the provincial nobility into the central institutions of the Muscovite state, the Chirikovs entered the elite ranks of civil and military service, with two members attaining seats in the Boyar Duma. Through advantageous marriage alliances, expanding landed wealth, and sustained investment in education, they secured a durable place among the privileged nobility of Russia. After the abolition of the old hereditary appointment system in the 1680s, the Chirikovs formally submitted their genealogy to the Muscovite state and were recognized among Russia's established noble lineages, a lasting confirmation of their success. In this way, the descendants of Prince Peter—a great-grandson of Chinggis Khan—were fully absorbed into the Russian noble order and participated in shaping the political life of the Muscovite state.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the transformation of Dair Kaidagul into Saint Peter Ordynsky was not simply the story of an individual conversion, but the historical convergence of Mongol imperial lineage, Orthodox sanctity, and Russian aristocratic incorporation. As a Chinggisid prince of the Jochid house, Peter's

¹⁵ A. Kleimola, "Потомки Петра, царевича Ордынского: Ростовский род Чириковых [The Descendants of Peter, the Tsarevich of the Horde: The Rostov Clan of the Chirikovs]," in *Средневековая Русь [Medieval Rus']* (Idrik, 2020), 144.

baptism, monastic patronage, and eventual canonization reveal the permeability of political, religious, and social boundaries in the thirteenth-century Mongol world. His life demonstrates that conversion in the Mongol imperial sphere could function not only as an act of personal faith, but also as a mechanism of political translation through which a prince of the Golden Horde could be absorbed into the ecclesiastical and noble order of Rus’.

Peter Ordynsky’s significance lies in this dual afterlife. In the religious sphere, he was transformed from a Mongol prince into an Orthodox saint whose cult endured in liturgical memory, sacred space, and ecclesiastical tradition. In the secular sphere, his descendants entered the Russian noble order as the Chirikov lineage, preserving within Muscovite political life the genealogical afterlife of a Chinggisid house. His conversion and canonization thus marked more than the sanctification of a single Mongol nobleman: they reveal how Russian Orthodoxy absorbed Chinggisid legitimacy, translated it into sanctity, and embedded it within the social and political fabric of Rus’.

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