

## THE BATTLE OF KALKA AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

### Initial Mongol Conquests outside of Inner Asia

Chinggis Qagan (also, Ghengis Khan, etc) (1206–1227), being one of the most important conquerors in world history, after arduous battles, took all the Turkish and Mongol tribes within Inner Asia under his hegemony and formalized that situation at a *quriltai* (grand assembly), held in 1206. He had to show new targets to his subjects who were expecting booty. Until 1206, he had fought with relatively small and weak entities, and defeated them. But now there were great powerful countries and empires in the surrounding area. The closest for the Mongols was China. There, the Jin Dynasty (1115–1234) in the north, Xixia (1038–1227) in the northwest, the Northern Song Dynasty (960–1127) and later the Southern Song Dynasty (1127–1279) in the south were the sovereign powers. After China, the Eastern Turkestan was an important centre of power. At that time, the Qara Khitai Empire (1124–1218) prevailed there. In the farther west, in Western Turkestan, there was the Khwarazmian Empire (1097–1231).

At the beginning of 13<sup>th</sup> century, although the population of the Mongols in north of China (Inner Asia) was approximately one million, the population of China was at least 100–120 millions and half of it was living in the Northern China. Chinggis Qagan could dare to take an action against such a great power. Although *The Secret History of the Mongols* mentions these raids only among the events of 1211<sup>1</sup>, the expeditions began first on Xixia in the years of 1205 and 1207, and continued in 1209–1210. As a consequence of these assaults, this state was made a Mongol tributary. Before the Xixia expedition had even reached a decisive result, the Mongols had penetrated to the borderlands of the Jin Dynasty. In 1207–1208, an army under the command of Jochi, the eldest son of Chinggis Qagan, was sent to the Southern Siberia and the tribes in that area were made to subject to the state. Then Jebe and Sube’etei, who were the two

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<sup>1</sup> *The Secret History*, 2001, pp. 233–240.

ablest and famous generals of Chinggis Qagan, continued this campaign. But their entrance into the domains of the Khwarazmian Empire forced its emperor, Muhammad II, to take an action and both sides waged a battle. This battle was the first encounter of the Mongols with the Khwarazmians. However, neither side could win that war definitively. Even after surviving this encounter, the Khwarazmian emperor got into another scrape, and he eventually lost Samarqand to Guchluk the Naiman in 1210<sup>2</sup>.

Chinggis Qagan, who not only mounted an expedition on the Jin Dynasty through three simultaneous lines, but also defeated the army of the Jin many times and ultimately he conquered the Jin capital of Chung-tu (Jungdu, Zhongdu), near modern Beijing in the spring of 1215<sup>3</sup>. These developments put the larger part of the Jin Empire in the Mongol hands. In addition, following the winter of 1216–1217, Chinggis embarked on expeditions south of the *Yellow River*. Then he turned his attention to the west; and in China, he organized his conquests by establishing a branch tribal federation, a *tanma*, “nomadic garrison force”.

As of 1217, the Mongol attentions shifted from China to the west. Because, Guchluk the Naiman, who usurped the Qara Khitai Empire’s throne in 1213, caused some problems for the Mongols. Not only did he fall out of favour with the Khwarazmians, but also mounted an expedition on the Almaliq ruler, a subject of Chinggis Qagan, and even killed him. During the winter of 1216–1217, Chinggis Qagan sent Jebe, who was one of his commanders, to Guchluk. Jebe, with an army under his command, first captured Balasagun and then Kashgar; thus he caused Guchluk to flee to the farther south. As a result, Guchluk was caught in Badakhshan in 1218 and was killed<sup>4</sup>.

While the Mongol armies under the command of Jebe were gaining victories through the southern line in the Eastern Turkestan; under the control of Jochi, they took the tribes in Southern Siberia under their hegemonies in 1217–1218. Hence the Mongols became the neighbour of the Khwarazmians.

<sup>2</sup> İbnü'l-Esir, 2008, pp. 121–123; Barthold, 1990, p. 388; Biran, 2005, p. 79.

<sup>3</sup> Rashiduddin, 1999, vol: I, p. 224; D’Ohsson, 2006, p. 75; Roux, 2001, p. 167.

<sup>4</sup> For the Eastern Turkestan Expedition of the Mongols, see Rashiduddin, 1999, vol: I, pp. 228–231; D’Ohsson 2006, pp. 77–82; Barthold, 1990, pp. 425–428.

Although, at the beginning, there were close friendship and trade relations between these two countries, soon these relations broke down. Especially the *Otrar Incident*<sup>5</sup>, which occurred in the late spring of 1218, led to developments which were hard to recover. Even though Chinggis Qagan asked that the offenders be punished and the goods recovered, Muhammad the Khwarazmshah ignored him. This incident is remembered as the *casus belli* for the Mongol invasion. The campaign began in late 1218.

The cities of Khwarazmian Empire, Jand on April 21, 1219; Otrar on February, 1220; Bukhara and Samarqand on March, 1220 fell to the Mongol hands one by one. Because Muhammad the Khwarazmshah greatly feared the Mongol army's quick mobility and combat power, he could not dare to meet it in one way or another and fled constantly. Chinggis Qagan, determined to capture him so as to bring the Turkestan expedition to a certain end, appointed Jebe and Sube'tei to find him. Muhammad continued to flee, but at the end he died in an island in the Caspian Sea, where he had taken refuge, because of pneumonia<sup>6</sup>.

### The Mongols in the Caucasus

When the Mongol generals learned the death of Muhammad, they did not stop on their conquering ways, going so far as to even as permission from Chinggis Qagan to continue their expedition<sup>7</sup>, – though they did not wait for his reply and with approximately with 30.000 soldiers<sup>8</sup> they went ahead through the south of the Caspian Sea<sup>9</sup>. Indeed, this

<sup>5</sup> For the details of the event, see Rashiduddin, 1999, vol: I, pp. 233–235; Cüveyni, 1999, 116–119; D'Ohsson 2006, pp. 83–98; Barthold, 1990, 422–425; Petrushevskii, 1977, pp. 112–114.

<sup>6</sup> For the Turkestan Expedition of Chinggis Qagan see Rashiduddin, 1999, vol: II, pp. 241–256; Cüveyni, 1999, pp. 129–155; D'Ohsson 2006, pp. 99–138; Barthold, 1990, pp. 428–478; Petrushevskii, 1977, pp. 107–139.

<sup>7</sup> Rashiduddin, 1999, vol: II, p. 258; Boyle, 1968, p. 311.

<sup>8</sup> The number of the soldiers is given by Cüveyni. See Cüveyni, 1999, p. 158. Petrushevskii also gives the same number. See Petrushevskii, 1977, p. 117. On the contrary, Gumilëv (2003, p. 152) gives the number of the Mongol soldiers as 60.000, and Kurat (2002, p. 94) as 20.000.

<sup>9</sup> Although, in *The Secret History*, this expedition was commanded only by Sube'tei, in other sources the name of Jebe also is mentioned. See, *The Secret History*, 2001, p. 253.

expedition was originally prepared to catch the Khwarazmian Emperor, but now it turned into a new kind of exploratory warfare. Some researchers called this expedition a reconnaissance one. Mustafa Kafalı, a Turkish academician, called it as the First Dasht-i Qipchaq Expedition<sup>10</sup>.

In 1220, first they made conquests in the northern part of today's Iran; and plundered and massacred in the cities thereof<sup>11</sup>. When the winter came, they reached modern Azerbaijan and camped at the Mugan Steppe. In the beginning of 1221 they started a reconnaissance towards the kingdom of Georgia. However, their main aim was not to plunder these lands. Nevertheless, on their way a Georgian army with 10.000 soldiers was awaiting them. In a fierce battle, the Georgians were defeated<sup>12</sup>. Then, the Mongols briefly returned to the northern Iran. But after Rajab 618 (August–September 1221), they again came to Georgia and waged a battle with the Georgians. As a Mongol war strategy, when Sube'tei came to war with the Georgian army, Jebe remained behind. As a tactic, Sube'tei firstly attacked to the enemy with a partial force, and after a short time he retreated. Upon seeing this, the Georgian army, as yet not terribly injured and still with high vigour, followed him, but was caught in a trap and encircled. According to Rashiduddin, 30.000 Georgian soldiers were massacred<sup>13</sup>.

The Mongol army continued its way and came to Shirvan. Its next target was to reach Derbent, but the army was in need of a pathfinder – a guide. That is why the Mongols “enlisted” ten such people in Shirvan and in order to intimidate the group into submission, they killed one of them<sup>14</sup>. After going beyond the Derbent Pass, they reached the Lezgian and Alan territory. First, the Mongols gave a great defeat to the Lezgis. Then, in 1222, they approached the lands where the Alans lived. The Alans, who thought that they could not defeat the Mongols, asked for help from their neighbours, the Qipchaqs. In spite of the bloody wars, when the Mongols determined

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<sup>10</sup> Kafalı, 1976, p. 17. Also see, G. Vernadsky, 1959b, p. 40.

<sup>11</sup> For the conquests of the Mongol army under the commander of Jebe and Sube'tei in Iran, see İbnü'l-Esir, 2008, pp. 225–226; D'Ohsson 2006, pp. 139–142; Boyle, 1968, pp. 308–311.

<sup>12</sup> Rashiduddin, 1999, vol: II, p. 259.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* Also see, İbnü'l-Esir, 2008, p. 236.

<sup>14</sup> D'Ohsson 2006, p. 143.

that they could not defeat the allied Alan-Qipchaq army, they wangled diplomatically as usual<sup>15</sup>. Having sent a messenger to the Qipchaqs, they remarked that the Mongols and the Qipchaqs were of the same race, but they (the Qipchaqs) did not have a common point with the Alans. For this reason they argued that they (the Qipchaqs) must support them. Also, the Mongols promised that if the Qipchaqs supported them, they would make a good profit and gain booty abundantly<sup>16</sup>.

Yuri Konchekovich, the leader of the Qipchaqs, who believed in the Mongols, terminated his alliance with the Alans and returned with his tribe to their homeland. Subsequently, the Mongols ruined the Alans easily<sup>17</sup>. Then, the Mongols took advantage of Qipchaqs' scattered position and they advanced towards them in betrayal. Although the Qipchaqs made preparations against them, they were unsuccessful and lost the battle and also two of their leaders, Yuri Konchekovich and Daniil Kobiakovich, were killed<sup>18</sup>. The defeated Qipchaqs fled away in two parts; as one group of them fled to the Dnieper, the other one went to the upper course of the Don River. As a result of the victory, the Mongols not only retook the goods they had given to the Qipchaqs but also plundered whatever they had. Moreover, as they liked their homeland, the Dasht-i Qipchaq<sup>19</sup>, they decided to stay there in the winter of 1222–1223.

When the spring came, the Mongols kept on their forward operation and plundered and destroyed many cities in Crimea, especially the city of Sudak. Famine in the region was widespread as a result of these campaigns.

<sup>15</sup> For this strategy which had been applied by the Mongols, see, Barthold, 2006, pp. 134–135; Jackson, 2005, pp. 249–252.

<sup>16</sup> İbnü'l-Esir, 2008, p. 238; Rashiduddin, 1999, vol: II, p. 260; Karamzin, 2001, p. 458.

<sup>17</sup> İbnü'l-Esir, 2008, p. 238; Rashiduddin, 1999, vol: II, p. 260.

<sup>18</sup> Kurat, 2002, p. 92.

<sup>19</sup> From 11<sup>th</sup> century to the first half of 13<sup>th</sup> century, the Dasht-i Qipchaq that refers to the area which had been settled by the Qipchaqs, a Turkish tribe, starts from Irtysh River in the east. It lies from the north of the Caspian and Black Sea to the Karpats. See Kafalı, 1976, pp. 11–15. İbnü'l-Esir mentions that the Dasht-i Qipchaq has pasturage abundantly in summer and winter, and it is hot in winter, but it is cool in summer. That's why, the Mongols chose there as their lodging place. See İbnü'l-Esir, 2008, p. 238.

### The Alliance between the Qipchaqs and the Russians

Kotian (Köten, Koten) was the leader of Qipchaqs along with Basdi, the other leader of them, who fled to the side of the Dnieper River. The reason why Kotian arrived to the *Qipchaq Wall* and retreated to the Russian lands is that he was father-in-law of Mstislav Mstislavich the Daring (also the Bold or *Udaloy*), the Prince of Galicia<sup>20</sup>. He also had a significant reputation as he had helped to the Russian princes in their hard times before. Therefore, Kotian expected help from both his son-in-law and the other Russian princes<sup>21</sup>. Moreover, having mentioned how the Mongols were dangerous, Kotian frightened them by saying “*Our lands today were taken away by the Tatars, and they will take yours tomorrow; protect us, but if you do not help us, we will be killed today, and you tomorrow*”<sup>22</sup>. Not satisfied with these words, Kotian gave presents such as golden and precious goods, Qipchaq girls, horses and camels, to his son-in-law and the other Russian princes.

The Mongols, who defeated the Qipchaqs, aroused much anxiety among the Russians. Because of the influence of his father-in-law, Mstislav sent messengers to the other Russian princes and invited them to discuss the situation in Kyiv. Upon this invitation and warning, many Russian princes, especially Mstislav Romanovich of Kyiv (known in the annals as the Old and the Good), Mstislav Svyatoslavich of Chernigov, Daniil Romanovich of Volynia, Vsevolod Mstislavich, son of the prince of Kyiv, Mikhail Vsevolodovich, nephew of Chernigov, attended the council of war. They talked among themselves and earbashed about who these new invaders were<sup>23</sup>. Mstislav delivered a speech to the attendants of the meeting and said, “*If we, brethren, do not help them, then they will certainly surrender to the Tatars, and then they will have more power*”<sup>24</sup>. According to the decision taken at the end of the meeting, particularly by the offer of the

<sup>20</sup> *The Chronicle of Novgorod*, 1914, p. 64.

<sup>21</sup> In fact, this alliance between the Qipchaqs and the Russians was not for the first time. When a Seljuk military unit attacked to Sudak, the Qipchaqs allied with the Russians; but they were defeated to the Seljuk army. See, Vernadsky, 1959a, pp. 235–236; Gumilëv, 2003, p. 152.

<sup>22</sup> Kurat, 2002, p. 93; Vernadsky, 1959a, p. 237; Solov’ev, 2001, p. 822.

<sup>23</sup> Karamzin, 2001, p. 459.

<sup>24</sup> Solov’ev, 2001, p. 822; *The Chronicle of Novgorod*, 1914, p. 65.

Prince of Galicia, they would not wait for the Mongols to come to them, but they would meet them outside of the Russian lands<sup>25</sup>. However, Yuri Vsevolodovich, the prince of Vladimir-Suzdal, did not hasten to aid to his old rival and did not accept to involve in war personally. But later he sent his nephew, Vasilko Konstantinovich, along with a brigade<sup>26</sup>.

The Qipchaqs were very happy when they learned that the Russians would help them. Even some of them showed their satisfaction through converting to the Christianity. Especially, Basti Khan, one of the Qipchaqs leaders, was an example of this.

The troops of the Russian princes that finished their preparations and gathered on the right side of the Dnieper starting in April, 1223<sup>27</sup>. The princes of Chernigov, Kyiv, Smolensk, Galicia, Volynia, Putivl, Kursk and Trubetsk came one after another and joined into the main army. In the same way, the Qipchaqs came and participated in the army which was gathered against the Mongol invasion.

### **The Kalka Battle**

While these developments were happening on the enemy side, the Mongols were observing them closely. When they saw that a powerful Russian-Qipchaq alliance came into being against them, they applied the strategy they once had put into practice for the Alan-Qipchaqs. Jebe and Sube'tei sent a mission of 10 persons to the Russians. In the message, it is stated that the Qipchaqs misinformed them (the Russians), they (the Mongols) did not intend ill-will against them (the Russians), their problem was only with the Qipchaqs and if they (the Russians) had not broken the peace, they would not have an

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<sup>25</sup> İbnü'l-Esir, 2008, p. 239; Karamzin, 2001, p. 459. According to Akdes Nimet Kurat, if the Russians did not do what the Qipchaqs asked for and did not give support, they (the Russians) were worried about that they (the Qipchaqs) would ally with the Mongols and attack against them. For this reason, they gave response to the call of the Qipchaqs positively. See, Kurat, 2002, p. 93. According to İlyas Kamalov, the reason why the Russians accepted the call of the Qipchaqs was that they comprehended the turn would be them after the Qipchaqs. See, Kamalov, 2009, p. 76.

<sup>26</sup> Vernadsky, 1959a, 237; Grekov and Yakubovskii, 1950, p. 202; Cherepnin, 1977, p. 188.

<sup>27</sup> Dimnik, 2003, p. 293.

ill-will against them<sup>28</sup>. In fact, in reminding the Russians of the evils of the Qipchaqs against the Russians, the Mongols tried to break down their alliance and offered a new alliance to the Russians against the Qipchaqs as well<sup>29</sup>. Nevertheless, the Russian princes did not only accept the Mongol offers, but also they killed envoys.

The Mongols protested their envoys' death by sending a second mission. In a strongly worded message, the Mongol generals, Jebe and Sube'tei, accused the Russians of not listening them and of killing their envoys<sup>30</sup>. Nonetheless this second mission also could not persuade the Russians. But this time they did not kill the envoys and allowed them to return<sup>31</sup>. Meanwhile, the combined Russian Army mobilized to fight by the Mongols and the first troops crossed the Dnieper River on May 23, 1223.

Along with the Qipchaqs' participation, the Russian army reached towards 80.000 people<sup>32</sup>. Although the Russians were outnumbered,

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<sup>28</sup> D'Ohsson 2006, pp. 144–145; Solov'ev, 2001, p. 822; Kurat, 1999, p. 63. In *The Chronicle of Novgorod* the expression is as the following: "Behold, we hear that you are coming against us, having listened to the Polovets men; but we have not occupied your land, nor your towns, nor your villages, nor is it against you we have come. But we have come by God against our serfs, and our horse-herds, the pagan Polovets men, and do you take peace with us. If they escape to you, drive them off thence, and take to yourselves their goods. For we have heard that to you also they have done much harm; and it is for that reason also we are fighting them." See, *The Chronicle of Novgorod*, 1914, p. 65; Grekov and Yakubovskii, 1950, p. 202.

<sup>29</sup> Karamzin, 2001, p. 459; Vernadsky, 1959a, p. 237.

<sup>30</sup> In *The Chronicle of Novgorod*, it is stated: "Since you have listened to the Polovets men, and have killed all our envoys, and are coming against us, come then, but we have not touched you, let God judge all." See, *The Chronicle of Novgorod*, 1914, p. 65. In many sources it is written that in fact the Mongols did not aim at attacking the Russians. But in 1206, the Mongol Emperor, after taking the name of Chinggis, followed an expansionist policy. Thus it is not difficult to predict that the Mongols would follow such a kind of policy in the Russian lands. As İlyas Kamalov stated (2009, p. 76), probably the most appropriate expression is that the Russians accelerated the process of the Mongol invasion by helping to the Qipchaqs.

<sup>31</sup> Grekov and Yakubovskii, 1950, p. 203.

<sup>32</sup> The number is not certain in the sources. Grousset (2002, p. 246), Kamalov (2009, p. 76) and Gumilëv (2003, p. 154) give the number as 80.000. But Hartog (2004, p. 120) says that their number is 30.000.



their biggest handicap was having a fragmented structure. Even though the commander of the Russian army seemed to be Mstislav Mstislavich the Daring, Prince of Galicia, the army had a feudal character and each unit was commanded by its own commander. In addition to this, there was serious enmity among the princes<sup>33</sup>. Especially the princes of Galicia, Kyiv and Chernigov, who all three had the name of Mstislav, were not especially cooperative among themselves. Before starting war, these unsolved problems were an Achilles' heel. Contrary to this, although there were also Turks in the Mongol army, the structure was not fragmented.

Jebe and Sube'tei sent a scout of 1.000 soldiers in order to get much information about the Russian army. This battalion was noticed by the Russian army near the Dnieper River and was attacked. The defeat of this small garrison increased the Russian princes' courage and caused them to move blindly and carelessly<sup>34</sup>.

A second Mongol detachment was also defeated by Daniil Romanovich and left their animals as they withdrew. This second defeat of the Mongols made the Russians more courageous and they kept advancing. While the Russian army was gaining ground, the Mongol scouts sometimes attacked them and fell back feigning defeat in the skirmishes. And the Russian army was advancing forward on the routes and when they had pulled away into a certain place which was determined in advance by Mongol Commanders – a valley near the Kalka River, a branch of Kalchik River – the punishing final battle would commence. The retreat lasted for 8 days from the Dnieper River<sup>35</sup>. The reason why the Mongols employed these hit-and-run tactics by small attacks instead of waging a battle with the Russians in the first stage was that as a result of walking a long distance, the Russian soldiers would get tired and hence they could not fight seriously. The Mongols could also practice a better war strategy in such a place than in an open terrain.

When the Russian army approached to this valley, one part of the Mongol army waited in ambush in a forested land on the opposite side of the river and the other part was in a point at the lower course

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<sup>33</sup> Solov'ev, 2001, p. 823; Gumilëv, 2003, p. 154; Cherepnin, 1977, p. 189.

<sup>34</sup> Vernadsky, 1959a, p. 237.

<sup>35</sup> Solov'ev, 2001, p. 823.

of the river. The Russian army could not detect this trap. Because, when the Russian army came to this valley on May 31, 1223, they had made preparations for passing across the river and not for battle. Hence the Kalka Battle, which occurred between the two sides, can be accepted as a sudden attack operation rather than a pitched battle<sup>36</sup>. The primary reason why the Russians fell in this ambush is that they did not send a patrol to the surrounding area. Their judgement clouded from the previous victories.

When the military units which belonged to Mstislav Mstislavich, the Daring, and Daniil Romanovich of Volynia and also the Qipchaq army under the command of Yarun passed over the eastern side of the Kalka River, the Russian army was divided into two. The reason why Mstislav of Galicia moved apart from the main army is that he did not want to share the glory of victory with the other Russian princes<sup>37</sup>. The Mongols, who attacked more severely than before against this Russian army at the eastern coast of the river, caused a difficult circumstance for the Russians; some high ranking commanders, for instance Daniil Romanovich, were injured. But the Mongols did not wage battle terribly long and again pulled away.

Mstislav and Daniil, who supposed that the Mongols fled away, began to follow them. Hence they deepened the distance from the headquarters. While they were following the Mongol army, the second, hidden army of the Mongols attacked them suddenly. As this attack was not expected, it created a great panic within the Russian ranks; however, they rallied and got into a great fight with the Mongols. At once Mstislav Mstislavich was fighting with the Mongols, while he also asked for help from the princes of Kyiv and Cherginov who were

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<sup>36</sup> Rashiduddin and İbnü'l-Esir mention that the Russians were caught unawares by the Mongols. See, Rashiduddin, 1999, vol: II, p. 260; İbnü'l-Esir, 2008, p. 239.

<sup>37</sup> Grekov and Yakubovskii, 1950, p. 204. Martin Dimnik collated different reasons for acting of Mstislav Mstislavich the Bold alone. On this subject he says: "Mstislav of Kyiv was the commander-in-chief. Since Mstislav Udaloj acted independently of the other two, and because of his fiery spirit that his nickname "the Bold" reflected, he may have been envious of his cousin's position as supreme commander and wished to assume that role himself. Or he disagreed with his cousin's strategy. Finally, he may have wished to assume a role in battle different from the one that his cousin assigned to him." See, Dimnik, 2003, p. 295.

at the headquarters at the western coast of the Kalka River. But they disregarded this call – probably because of the disagreement between them and Mstislav Mstislavich<sup>38</sup>. The princes of Kyiv and Chernigov waited further so that he would soften up the enemy; thereby the Mongols would become weaker. In this way, they would defeat a weakened Mongol army more easily and they would receive the majority of the glory and honour.

Although the princes of Kyiv and Cherginov were not involved in the battle, Mstislav Mstislavich and his troops fought well. However, they could not resist the Mongols and a panic emerged within the army – a route began to take place. Initially the Qipchaqs fled away from the battlefield<sup>39</sup>. As the Qipchaqs fled, this caused much more disorder within the army<sup>40</sup>. Then Daniil, the prince of Volynia, ran as well. The final result in favour of the Mongols was becoming clear. Mstislav Mstislavich, who saw the flight of Daniil, receded as well and retreated to the western coast of the Kalka River. In order to prevent the Mongols from following him, he set fire to the boats left behind<sup>41</sup>. The flight of Mstislav meant one part of the Russian-Qipchaq army, which had divided into two before, was out of the war.

The second group of the Russian army at the western coast of the Kalka River could not also resist the Mongols either. Instead of waging a battle with the Mongols, they preferred to draw back to a hill and prepared a simple fortification there. Their initial retreat and regrouping was, in fact, prescient of their acceptance of the defeat.

One of the most important commanders in this second group was Mstislav Romanovich, the prince of Kyiv<sup>42</sup>. When the Mongols, who had besieged him for three days, could not break the resistance, they

<sup>38</sup> Dimnik, 2003, p. 295; Hartog, 2004, pp. 120–121.

<sup>39</sup> Solov'ev, 2001, pp. 823–824.

<sup>40</sup> The general opinion of the sources on losing the war was that the Qipchaqs had a great role. Especially Karamzin asserts this opinion. According to him, although the Qipchaqs were the perpetrators of this war, they killed the Russians to take their horses and clothing. See, Karamzin, 2001, p. 461.

<sup>41</sup> D'Ohsson 2006, p. 145; Grekov and Yakubovskii, 1950, p. 205.

<sup>42</sup> Karamzin criticizes the prince of Kyiv cynically and states: “Meanwhile, Mstislav Romanovich of Kyiv was still on the banks of the Kalka River in the fortified camp on the rocky mountain, saw the flight of Russians and did not budge: memorable example of generosity and military pride!” See, Karamzin, 2001, p. 461.

promised him no harm and release in return for a ransom. The Russians, who believed in this promise, surrendered to the enemy. But the Mongols, true to their usual tactics, did not keep the promise and killed many of them. As a last step, they celebrated their glory<sup>43</sup>. Thus, in the third day of the battle, on June 2, 1223, the last Russian resistance in the battlefield was destroyed. The nephew of the prince of Suzdal, who departed in order to join the block of alliances, turned back and thus escaped being killed.

The Russian army, which fled, was pursued up to the Dnieper River and the ones who were captured were either taken captive or killed<sup>44</sup>. The Mongols plundered the area up to the city of Novgorod Svyatopolk south of Kyiv and this action caused this area utter desolation. Although some commanders like Mstislav, the prince of Galicia, Vladimir Rurikovich, who would later be the prince of Kyiv, and Daniil Romanovich were able to avoid being killed by the Mongols, many nobles like Mstislav Romanovich of Kyiv, Mstislav Svyatoslavich of Chernigov and his son Dmitri lost their lives in this battle.

After this triumph, the Mongol army continued to move, but they suffered their largest defeat in this process. Upon having learned what the Mongol army did, the Bulgarian Turks gave them substantial damages by lying in an ambush<sup>45</sup>. According to İbnü'l-Esir, the Mongol army lost 4.000 people. In spite of this loss, the Mongols went along and reached to Chinggis Qagan eventually.

### **The Consequences of the Battle**

The Kalka Battle was the first encounter of the Russians with the Mongols. The defeat left a great effect on the Russians as well as the Qipchaqs. Since the beginning of Russian history they had never experienced such a large scale disaster. After the battle, they did not

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<sup>43</sup> *The Chronicle of Novgorod*, 1914, p. 66; Solov'ev, 2001, p. 824; Karamzin, 2001, p. 461; Vernadsky, 1959a, p. 238.

<sup>44</sup> According to Karamzin, the Mongols killed mercilessly the people, following the rule that the losers can not be friends of winners, and that death is first necessary to the security of the latter. See, Karamzin, 2001, pp. 461–462.

<sup>45</sup> This behaviour of the Bulgarians caused the Second Dasht-i Qipchaq Expedition, which would be directed towards their lands firstly. In the summer of 1237 the Bulgarians were defeated.

have as strong and a powerful army as before. According to the sources, six other Russian princes, in addition to the princes of Kyiv and Chernigov, along with the Russian nobles accounted for about 70 killed and merely 10.000 people from the forces of the prince of Kyiv were killed<sup>46</sup>. According to Karamzin, only one-tenth of the Russian army could be saved<sup>47</sup>. Owing to this battle, the entirety of Southern Russia trembled. In *the Chronicle of Novgorod*, the expedition of the Mongols and their massacres were regarded by the Russians as a punishment by God for their sins<sup>48</sup>. Also a mystery was created among the Russians as it was not clear that where the Mongols came from and they terrorized them so suddenly and again it was not clear that where they went<sup>49</sup>. Terrible cloud suddenly appeared over them, and so suddenly it disappeared.

In fact the number of soldiers who were fighting with the Mongols, in the Russian-Qipchaq alliance was not less. The allied Russian forces were more crowded than the Mongol army. When it was evaluated in terms the Russians and Qipchaqs, the battle occurred within their territory and it was not far from their homeland like the Mongols. Nonetheless, the Russian-Qipchaq army could not use this advantage and they were exposed to a great defeat by the Mongols and many of their high ranking administrators and commanders were killed as well. Suffering such a great defeat in a short time terrified the Russians. But this war, which was a complete victory for the Mongols, caused them to have a great courage for their next expeditions and enabled them to make their enemies feel as they were psychologically defeated. A feeling of defeatism spread among the Russians that the Mongols could not be stopped and resisting against them was impossible. Hence, during the Second Dasht-i Qipchaq Expedition, which began under the commandship of Batu Khan, one of the great emperors of the Golden Horde, the Russians constantly avoid waging a pitched battle against the Mongols and they stayed on the defensive, resisting far less than previously.

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<sup>46</sup> Kurat, 2002, p. 94, Dimnik, 2003, p. 296; Cherepnin, 1977, p. 189.

<sup>47</sup> Karamzin, 2001, p. 461.

<sup>48</sup> *The Chronicle of Novgorod*, 1914, p. 64, 66. Also see, Gudzi, 1949, p. 199. Perceiving the Mongols as a punishment of God is also seen in the Armenian sources. See, Aknerli Grigor, 2007, pp. 31–32.

<sup>49</sup> Vernadsky, 1959a, p. 239.

For the Russians, destruction had been experienced among the civilians as well as the soldiers. Their settlements were ruined and people were killed.

The Kalka Battle affected later Russian policy and political structure substantially. Because many Russian princes and nobles were killed during the battle, this situation created a political vacuum in the region. For example, the throne of Mstislav Romanovich of Kyiv, who was killed during the Kalka Battle, remained empty for a while, and then Vladimir Rurikovich (Vladimir III) came to the throne. Michael Vsevolodovich (later Michael of Chernigov), whose name was not mentioned much before and who was not an important political figure, gained importance. In place of his uncle Mstislav Svyatoslavich, who was killed in the Kalka Battle, he sat on the throne in the Holy Saviour Cathedral by a ceremony<sup>50</sup>.

When it is analysed in terms of the Russians, another important result of the Kalka Battle was that the Southern Russian Principalities lost their gravities and importance as determinants for the future period of the Russian history. Later, the influence and power passed into the hands of the Northern Russian Principalities. The Russian Empire, which would be established later, would be carried out by these northern principalities. In the context of Ukraine, after the Kalka Battle, Yaroslav Vsevolodovich, later Yaroslav II of Vladimir (1191–1246), strengthened his power and went on dominated in Kyiv between the years of 1236 and 1238.

The Kalka Battle caused also a great destruction for the Qipchaqs. From the mid – 11<sup>th</sup> century to the first half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, this Turkish community, who adopted the plains in the north of the Caspian and Black Sea as their homeland and was effective to be called this area as the Dasht-i Qipchaq (the Qipchaq Steppe), had to leave these lands. The Qipchaqs, especially under Kotian, left the region and had to flee to the Balkan Peninsula and other ways into Eastern Europe down to Hungary. Some of them took refuge in the Byzantine Empire<sup>51</sup>. This migration meant in a way that the Qipchaq pressure on the Russians was largely eliminated.

<sup>50</sup> Dimnik, 2003, p. 297.

<sup>51</sup> Dimnik, 2003, p. 298; Halperin, 2000, p. 235. Halperin defines that the number of the Qipchaqs taking refuge in Hungary under Kotian was 40.000; but he does not ignore to mention that the amount is exaggerated. Later the most of these Qipchaqs converted to the Christianity.

If the results of Kalka Battle are analysed in terms of the Mongols, the following can be claimed: the First Dasht-i Qipchaq Expedition, in which the Kalka Battle occurred, and which was one of the outstanding expeditions of the world war history, was in fact a reconnaissance mission. “Such an expedition has never been tried before and will be never tried”<sup>52</sup>. The administrators of the Mongol Empire, which reach to the Caspian Sea, sent a reconnaissance detachment to get more information about the state and people in the west, but this military unit took matters into their own hands and created a great impact on the lands of Azerbaijan, Georgia and the Dasht-i Qipchaq. By this expedition, the Mongols could be acquainted with the region and the people and also got serious information about their power. This information would be the guide for the Second Dasht-i Qipchaq Expedition which took place between the years of 1229–1242. Also Sube’tei who was one of the commanders in the First Dasht-i Qipchaq Expedition would be appointed as the counselor to Batu Khan.

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<sup>52</sup> Roux, 2001, p. 209.

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**APPENDIX 4:**



**An Illustration of Mongol Feast after the Defeat  
of the Prince of Kyiv**

**Source:** David Nicolle, Viacheslav Shpakovsky, *Kalka River, 1223:  
Genghiz Khan's Mongols Invade Russia*, Westport, Conn.:  
Praeger, 2005, pp. 78–79.

**APPENDIX 5:**



**Worship cross in place of the Kalka Battle, installed in 1998**

**Source:** [http://www.historydoc.edu.ru/catalog.asp?cat\\_ob\\_no=12208&ob\\_no=14047](http://www.historydoc.edu.ru/catalog.asp?cat_ob_no=12208&ob_no=14047) (30.09.2011)