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**JÄBÄ AND SÜBÄ'ÄTÄI'S  
MILITARY EXPEDITION TO THE WEST:  
Sources of the first Struggle between the Alans and the Mongols**

§ 1. During the thirteenth century, advancing towards the West, the Mongols fought against a number of peoples including the Alans. Known to the Mongols as Asud (*As-ud*, plural of *As*), the Alans were partially forced out to the Far East during the 1230s. Hereabouts their presence was also noticed by John of Plano Carpini<sup>1</sup> and William of Rubruck<sup>2</sup> in Mongolia, and by Giovanni de' Marignolli<sup>3</sup> in China. Thanks to their military skill, about thirty thousand

<sup>1</sup> /.../ Ab illis vero quos redire permittunt, petunt eorum filios aut fratres, quos ulterius numquam dimittunt, sicut actum est de filis Ierozlai et de quondam alio duce Alanorum et aliis pluribus" [*Historia Mongalorum*, ch. VII, § 5, l. 49-52]; "/.../ Terrorum nomina quos vicerunt sunt hec: Kytai, Naimani, Solangi, Karakytai sive nigri Kytai, Canana, Tumat, Voyrat, Karaniti, Huygur, Sumoal, Merkiti, Mecriti, Sarihuyur, Bascart id est Magna Hungaria, Kergis, Cosmir, Sarraceni, Bisermini, Turcomani, Byleri id est Magna Bulgaria, Corala, Comuchi, Burithabet, Parossiti, Cassi, Alani sive Assi, Obesi sive Georgiani, Nestoriani, Armeni, Kangit, Comani, Brutachi qui sunt Iudei, Mordui, Torci, Gazari, Samogedi, Perses, Tati, India Minor sive Ethiopia, Circassi, Ruteni, Baldac, Sarti. Alie terre sunt plures, sed eorum nomina ignoramus. Vidimus etiam viros et mulieres fere de omnibus terris superius nominatis" [*Historia Mongalorum*, ch. VII, § 9, l. 100-110]. The quotations are from Giovanni di Pian di Carpini, *HM* : 286, 289-290. See also the following quotations from John of Plano Carpini referring to the Alans: *HM* ch. V, § 26, l. 321-324; ch. IX, § 12, l. 171-175; ch. IX, § 20, l. 251-258.

<sup>2</sup> /.../ tunc affluit magna multitudo Christianorum Hungarorum, Alanorum Rutenorum Georgianorum Hermenorum, qui omnes non videbant sacramentum ex quo fuerant capti..." [*Itinerarium*, ch. XXX : 280]. See also: *Itinerarium*, ch. X : 191; ch. XI : 191-192, ch. XIV : 199; ch. XVIII: 209-211; ch. XIX : 211; ch. XXVII : 315. Cf.: Guglielmo di Rubruck, *It.*

<sup>3</sup> Giovanni de' Marignolli, R. : "/.../ Summi etiam principes sui imperii tocuis plus quam triginta millia qui vocantur Alani et totum gubernant imperium orientis sunt christiani, re vel nomine, et dicunt se sclavos Pape, parati mori pro Franquis; sic enim vocant nos, non a Francia sed a Franquia. Horum primus Apostulus fuit frater Iohannes dictus de Monte Corvino, qui primo miles, iudex et doctor Friderici Imperatoris post 72 annos factus frater Minor doctissimus et scientissimus..." (pag. 526). The Alans are also mentioned in the *Relatio* on page 543.

Alans entered the imperial guard in Peking<sup>4</sup> during the Yüan dynasty<sup>5</sup>. There, at the beginning of the fourteenth century, they were present at the missionary Monte Corvino's preaching<sup>6</sup> and in 1336 they sent Pope Benedictus XII (1334–1342) a letter of subordination to the Church in Rome<sup>7</sup>. By this time, more than a hundred years had passed since the first struggle between the Mongols and the Alans. Between 1220 and 1223, in fact, *noyan* Jäbä<sup>8</sup> and *ba'atur* Sübä'ätäi<sup>9</sup>,

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<sup>4</sup> *Peregrino di Castello, Ep.*: “/.../ item quidam christiani boni qui dicuntur Alani XXX milibus a Rege maximo stipendio accipientes ipsi et familie eorum ad fr. Iohannem recurrunt. Et ipse eos confortat et predicat”. See also *Pelliot* (1914): 623-644; *Cordier* (1921): 420-423.

<sup>5</sup> The Yüan dynasty reigned in China from 1271 to 1368. It followed the Sòng dynasty (960-1279) and preceded the Ming dynasty (1368-1644).

<sup>6</sup> *Giovanni di Monte Corvino, Ep.*; *Wynngaert* (1924).

<sup>7</sup> From Toghhan Temur's (cin. Shùn Dì) letter of 1336 to the Pope: “/.../ Nos mittimus nuntium nostrum Andream Francum cum quindecim sociis ad Papam, Dominum christianorum in Franchiam ultra septem maria, ubi sol occidit, ad aperiendam viam nunciis saepe mittendis per nos ad Papam et per Papam ad nos, et ad rogandum ipsum Papam, ut mittat nobis suam benedictionem et in orationibus sanctis semper memoriam faciat de nobis. Et quod Alanos servitores nostros, filios suos christianos, habeat recommendatos. Item quod adducant nobis ab occasu solis equos et alia mirabilia. Scripta in Cambalec in anno Rati, mense sexto, tertia die lunationis”. The Alans say: “/.../ Hoc autem Sanctitate Vestrae sit notum, quod longo tempore fuimus informati in fide catholica, et salubriter gubernati, et consolati plurimum per legatum vestrum fratrem Iohannem, valentem, sanctum, et sufficientem virum, qui tamen mortuus est ante octo annos /.../ Quare supplicamus sapientiae vestrae, quod mittatis nobis bonum, sufficientem ac sapientem legatum, qui curam habeat de animabus nostris et quod cito veniat /.../ et ideo recomendatis nos sibi, filios vestros, et fratres, et fideles alios, qui sunt in imperio eius”. Cf.: *Wynngaert* (1929): LXXXIII; *Wadding* (1733): 209-214; *Golubovich* (1923): 250-251.

<sup>8</sup> Mongolian *noyan* (pl. *noyad*). He appears for the first time in *The Secret History of the Mongols* in § 146, where he is said to be a servant of Tödögä, the Tayčī'ud [manaqarši üdür Sorqan-šira Jäbä qoyar Tayičī'ud-un Tödögä-yin haran aqsat tädä qoyar bär iräba-gü, Cf.: *Pelliot* (1949): 42]. The name Jäbälä (in Mongolian Jäbä means “arrow head”) was given to him by Činggis qayan because during the Koiten battle he had hit the horse Jäbälä with an arrow. His real name was Jırqo'adaı [Jırqo'adaı nārätü aju'u mün jäbäläjü aman čaqan qula-yi münü aman nıru'u qarbuqsan-u tula Jäbä nāräyitcü jäbäläyä imayı k'än. Jäbä nāräyitcü dārgädä münü yabu k'än jarlıq bolba. Jäbä Tayičī'ud-ača iräjü nököčäksän yosun täyimü, *Pelliot* (1949): 43].

<sup>9</sup> Sübä'ätäi was one of the most valiant Mongolian commanders. He fought in every front, from China to Central Asia and to Russia: [*PSRL* (1962): 785]. In the *Secret History of the Mongols*, he is mentioned for the first time in § 120 where he is described as one of Jälmä's younger brothers [Jälmä-yin dä'ü Ča'urqan Sübä'ätäi-ba'atur Uriangqan-ača qaqačaju Jälmätür näyilän iräba, *Pelliot* (1949): 31]. Cf: *Lidell Hart* (1971), *Yuan shi*, § 121, *Kal* u-

leading an army of approximately 20,000 people, had begun the expedition to the West that, starting from Samarkand through the Caucasus to the steppe in the Southern Ukraine<sup>10</sup>.

Jābā and Sūbā'ātāi's expedition and their following struggles against many peoples have already been studied<sup>11</sup>. However, so far as we know, there is not a detailed work that gives an exhaustive report of the passages related to the expedition from the different sources. Also, there is no analysis of this military expedition as a whole.

The aim of this work, therefore, is to analyse some of the passages that refer to an episode of the expedition that has not been given the right attention: the first struggle between the Mongols and the Alans. In addition, this analysis is also supposed to help clear up some problems, such as the chronological order of the events and the route followed by the Mongolian troops.

There are many different sources referring to Jābā and Sūbā'ātāi's expedition to the West, but generally they can be divided into three main categories. The first group of sources is concerned with the initial purpose of the mission, that is to say the pursuit of 'Alā' al-Dīn Muḥammad H<sup>w</sup>ārazm Šaḥ. The second group focuses on the further mission's expansion which brought the Mongols across the Caucasus to the battle on the Kalka river against the Russian-Qipčaq coalition. The third group, alternatively, offers a more 'neutral' point of view, assuming that the expedition is only a single episode within a wider frame: the Mongols' presence in a territory ranging from Indo-China to the Adriatic Sea coasts.

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z y n s k i (1978) : 123-134. The Mongolian term "*ba'atur*" refers to the old Turkish \**bagatur*, Cf. Čagathaic *batur* and Kalmyk *батар* "strong" etc.; this term passed to Russian as *богатырь*, in Ukrainian *богатыр*, in Polish *bohater*, in Hungarian *bator* "brave". Cf.: V a s m e r (1986). In Ossetic we find *bæyatyf / bæyater*, in Iron often with metathesis *qæbatyr*. Cf.: A b a e v (1958).

<sup>10</sup> According to Ćuwaynī, the aim of the mission was just to pursue the Sultan 'Ala'al-Dīn Muḥammad, Ć u w a y n ī, *GK* : 170; according to Rašīd al-Dīn the expedition had been planned by Činggis qayan since 1207 and it was seen as one of his son Joči's task, R a š ī d a l - D ī n, *Sl*: 229. See also *The Secret History of the Mongols* § 262.

<sup>11</sup> Jābā and Sūbā'ātāi's expedition to the Transcaucasia was studied by Georg Altunian [A l t u n i a n (1911)] and by Edmond Schütz [S c h ü t z (1973) : 252-273]; nevertheless, in his introduction to *The Secret History of the Mongols* by John of Plano Carpini (pag. 14, nota 5) Luciano Petech complains about the lacking of a recent and exhaustive analysis of the expedition to the Southern Russia. He does not consider sufficient the two pages written by B. Spuler [S p u l e r (1965): 12-14], and those written by G. Vernadsky [V e r n a d s k y (1948): 235-239]. In my opinion a good answer to this requirement can be found in V. K. Romanov's articles in the 80s.

§ 2. Jäbä and Sübä'ätäi's expedition and their progress to the west starts from Samarkand in 1220<sup>12</sup>. Therefore, this year is considered the lower limit for the events we are going to analyse. Only Saḡang Sečen traces the Corasmia war back to a date earlier than the traditional one which places the beginning of the military campaign in 1219, in Farġānā. However, the difference in time between the two dates is so substantial as to make his point of view unacceptable<sup>13</sup>. All the different sources agree on the fact that Jäbä and Sübä'ätäi had an army of about 20-30 thousand people. There is a well-known quotation from *Tārīh-e ġehān gošā* by Ğuwaynī, where Činggis qaḡan entrusts Jäbä (here called Yeme) and Sübä'ätäi with 30,000 people; "each of them is worth 1,000 soldiers of the Sultan's army as a wolf is to a flock of sheep or as a burning coal is to a bush of dry cane"<sup>14</sup>. Ğuwaynī does not mention Tuḡučar, the unfortunate Qonqirat commander, who died along the walls of Nišapur<sup>15</sup>. But from other sources we know that at the beginning of the expedition Tuḡučar had a leading role as important as Jäbä and Sübä'ätäi's<sup>16</sup>. Abu'l-Ġāzī, in *Šacara-i türk*, underlines twice that the number of soldiers under Jäbä, Sübä'ätäi and Tuḡučar's leadership is 30,000, and that at the death of the latter his soldiers join Jäbä's troops<sup>17</sup>. The Armenian chronicler Vardan, names 20,000 people, called Mugal or Tatar who left Čin and Mačin country<sup>18</sup>. Rus-sutana and Johannes's letters to the Pope in Rome - the first documents that appeared in the western countries referring to the Mongols - mention 25,000

<sup>12</sup> Samarkand fell after five days of fighting the 10th of Muḡarram / 19th of March.

<sup>13</sup> Saḡang Sečen, *GOM*: 86 (Mongolian text): 87 (German).

<sup>14</sup> Ğuwaynī, *GK*: 170.

<sup>15</sup> According to Abu 'l-Ġāzī in Herat. /.../ During the fighting Tuḡučar was killed by an arrow thrown from the fort and his troops joined noyan Jäbä's ones. A b u ' l - Ġ ā z ī B a h ā - d u r H ā n, *HMT*: 118, *HMT*<sub>2</sub>: 126.

<sup>16</sup> /.../ In this time Činggis qaḡan had sent his commanders Jäbä noyan, Sübä'ätäi Ba'atur and Tuḡučar, the Qonqirat to pursue the Sultan Mohammed. A b u ' l - Ġ ā z ī B a h ā - d u r H ā n, *HMT*: 115, *HMT*<sub>2</sub>: 122.

<sup>17</sup> /.../ (Činggis qaḡan) stayed in person to assiege Balh and sent the noyan Jäbä, Sübä'ätäi ba'atur and Tuḡučar the Qonqirat, pursuing the Sultan, each of them with 10,000 soldiers.

A b u ' l - Ġ ā z ī B a h ā d u r H ā n, *HMT*: 115, *HMT*<sub>2</sub>: 122. /.../ The noyan Jäbä, sent by Činggis qaḡan at his arrival in the Maveḡannahr, to pursue the Sultan Mohammed H<sup>w</sup>arezmšah with 30,000 soldiers, came from the Yssut tribe that descended from Čentai Otčijin. A b u ' l - Ġ ā z ī B a h ā d u r H ā n, *HMT*: 66, *HMT*<sub>2</sub>: 70.

<sup>18</sup> /.../ In year 669 unknown troops, which spoke an unknown language and were called Mugal or Tatar, left Čin and Mačin's country and, in number of 20,000, they penetrate into Gugar valleys. P a t k a n o v (1873): 2.

dead soldiers among the Mongolian troops. This number is undoubtedly exaggerated and more likely can be explained by a desire to justify the fact that no troops had been sent to the Holy Land<sup>19</sup>. Also Abu'l-Fidā in his *Annals* mentions that 20,000 people set out from Samarkand and pursue H<sup>w</sup>ārazm Šāh<sup>20</sup>. There are many statements about the number of Mongolian pursuers (we quoted only some of them), and this is why all the historians dealing with these events, from the ancient times to today are of the same opinion. René Grousset, for example, mentions 25,000 people<sup>21</sup>. It seems rather interesting to read the related passage from the *The Secret History of the Mongols* [monyol-un niyuča tobčiyān]<sup>22</sup>. We consider § 262 in Pelliot's edition (1949). Here we do not find any reference either to the number of soldiers, or to Jābā, but we find some information about Sūbā'ātāi who is supposed to conquer 11 countries and 11 peoples<sup>23</sup>. In this work, the Corasmia war is talked about from § 257 to § 263. This means that § 262 essentially describes Jābā and Sūbā'ātāi's expedition in the early 20s of the thirteenth century. Furthermore, Sūbā'ātāi receives the order of the expedition from Činggis qaγan who, as we know, dies in 1227. If we

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<sup>19</sup> /.../ illi mali homines Tartari intraverunt terram nostram et multa damna intulerunt genti nostre, et interfecerunt sex milia de nostris et nos non cavebamus ob ipsis, quia credebamus eos Christianos esse; sed postea quam intelleximus eos non esse bonos Christianos, collectis viribus insurreximus in eos et interfecimus viginti quinque milia de illis et cepimus multos ex illis et reliquos fugavimus de terra nostra...; *MGH Epist. XIII s.* (1873), № 251 : 178; /.../ cum prepararemus nos magnifice in armis et equis, victualibus et personis venire ad succursum Christianorum et liberationem sepulcri, Tartari, cruce precedente eos, intraverunt terram nostram et sic sub specie Christiane religionis deceperunt nos et usque ad sex milia interfecerunt de nostris. Set postquam intelleximus eos non esse veros Christianos nos cum gratia vestra et auxilio sancte crucis insurreximus in eos, et interfecimus de eis usque ad viginti quinque milia equitum, et quosdam de ipsis cepimus aliosque fugavimus de finibus nostris, et ista fuit causa, quare non potuimus adimplere mandatum vestrum factum per lagatum ...; *MGH Epist. XIII s.* (1873), № 252; 179.

<sup>20</sup> Abu'l-Fidā, *An.*: 95 (Arabic text and French translation).

<sup>21</sup> Grousset (1960): 306-308.

<sup>22</sup> *The Secret History of the Mongols* reached us in a Chinese version *Yüan chao bishi* and in a Mongolian transcript that used Chinese characters only for their phonetic value. There are many translations among which: H a e n i s c h (1948); H e i s s i g (1981); K o z i n (1941).

<sup>23</sup> /.../ Basa Sūbā'ātāi-ba'atur-ī ümäksi Qanglīn Kībča'ut Bajīgīt Orusut Majarat Asut Sasut Särkäsiüt Käšimir Bolar Kārāl ānā harban nikān ayımaq qar'ın irgān-tür gürtälä Idil Jayaq usutan mürät kätülün Kivamān Kārmān balaqasun-tur gürtälä Sūbā'ātāi-ba'atur-ī ayala'ulba. Pelliot (1949) : 108; see also: L u b s a n D a n z a n. *At.*: 228.

draw attention to the fact that a considerable number of peoples the Mongols could not get familiar with, is listed in this passage of the *The Secret History of the Mongols*, we realize that the subject of this description can not be only the first expedition. The events which are herein described, in fact, seem more likely to be related to Sübä'ätäi's expedition to the West in 1229 (when Jäbä having already died soon after the first expedition) after the *quriltai* and the election of Ögödäi. § 270 clearly states that Sübä'ätäi has some difficulties when he tries to subdue the peoples against whom he had been sent by Činggis qayan. It is probable that two different events are mixed together in this passage: Jäbä and Sübä'ätäi's expedition in 1220, ended whilst Činggis qayan was still alive, and Sübä'ätäi's expedition to the West in 1229. All this shows that the first expedition to the West did not signify anything exceptional to the Mongols and thereby was not given great attention in the *Secret History*.

§ 3. 'Alā'al-Dīn Muḥammad ends his life on a little island in the Caspian Sea at the beginning of 1221<sup>24</sup>. There is no agreement of opinions either about the movements of the Mongolian troops pursuing him or about the exact date. To understand the problem, it is enough to analyse the dates which have been proposed for the Mongols appearance in Transcaucasia<sup>25</sup>. Some sources trace the Mongols presence back to 1208<sup>26</sup>. However, apart from Mxhit'ar Ayrivane'c'i and Grigor Aknerc'i, whose suggestions (in 1211-1220<sup>27</sup> and 1214<sup>28</sup> respectively) are in contrast with the belief commonly shared, because during this period the Mongols were located far away from the Caucasus, the more

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<sup>24</sup> /.../ This island is called by the historians Asukun, or island of the Absukun sea, that is to say the Caspian sea. Absukun was a sea village which worked as a port for the town of Jurjan in the Mazendaran. O h s s o n (1824) : 191; /... /A b u 'l - F i d ā . A n : 95; corresponding now with the peninsula of Gumish tepe, H o w o r t h (1876) : 82.

<sup>25</sup> Writing in the first half of the XIX century Klaproth thought that the Mongols had reached Georgia for the first time in 1225-1226 [K l a p r o t h (1833) : 7]. According to Petit de la Croix instead it was in 1222 [P e t i t d e l a C r o i x (1711) : 418]. Deguignes states the passage through the Caucasus in 1223 [D e g u i g n e s (1757) : 53].

<sup>26</sup> Cf : *Chronica Albrici monachi Trium Fontium a monacho novi monasterii Hoiensis interpolata* : /.../ dicit episcopus Cuviniensis de Armenia, quod Tartari hoc anno primum bellum fecerunt in maiori Armenia et ceciderunt de christianis 27000, et de Tartari vero 63000. Qui venerant sine uxoribus, unde recedentes non fuerunt postea visi usque ad annos 20. *MGH SS* (1874) : 889,1. 27-29; according to Bezzola these events refer to 1248, B e z z o l a (1974) : 59

<sup>27</sup> M x i t ' a r A y r i v a n e c ' i , P H : 65.

<sup>28</sup> A I M (1962) : 103; G r i g o r A k n e r c ' i , P T ' : 22.

reliable series of sources mention 1220 or 1221<sup>29</sup>. In his article *Zavoevanie Armenii Mongol'skimi vojskami*, professor Galstyan considers the year 1220 as the most exact date of the Mongols appearance. He also assumes that only one struggle took place by the end of that year<sup>30</sup>. Whether there was more than one struggle or not, it is still a difficult question to be solved because it is possible to support different conclusions depending on the sources analysed<sup>31</sup>. It is clear, however, that the point of view is different in every case. In Ganjakec'i's opinion, the Mongols "take with them their women, children and their things and move towards Derbent with the intention of returning to their houses"<sup>32</sup> because they do not dare to face the newly founded army, which had been assembled by George IV Laša. On the other hand, § 121 in the *Yüan shi*<sup>33</sup>, tells us that Sübä'ätäi had already asked for and obtained Činggis qayan's permission to attack the Qipčaq. That means that their passage through the Caucasus had been planned long before. The struggle against the Georgians and the passage through Armenia Maior are documented by some western chronicles also<sup>34</sup>.

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<sup>29</sup> 1220 year according to Kirakos Ganjakec'i and Vardan; K i r a k o s G a n j a k e c' i, *PH*: 190; P a t k a n o v (1874) : I; P a t k a n o v (1873) : 2; 1220-21 year according to Georgian chronicle: B r o s s e t (1849), I : 492.

<sup>30</sup> According to Manandyan there were two struggles: one in December 1220 in the Khunan valley and the other in January 1221 near Kotman, M a n a n d y a n (1952) : 181-183; according to Babayan there were three fights. The first in the Agstefy region at the end of December 1220; the second on the Kotman in January 1221, and the third in the Khunan region in 1222, B a b a y a n (1964) : 169, 173, 180; according to Galstyan, on the contrary, the terms Kotman and Khunan refer to the same place (=Vardan says that the Mongols came to the Gugar's valley from Aghuan [P a t k a n o v (1873) : 2] and Kirakos Ganjakec'i calls this place "valley of Khunan" [K i r a k o s G a n j a k e c' i, *PH* : 191] ) and therefore there was only one struggle. Cf.: G a l s t y a n (1977) : 158-177.

<sup>31</sup> According to Ibn al-Afīr there were three fights with the Georgians I b n a l - A t ī r, *KT*<sub>2</sub>: 155-160; according to Rašīd ad-Dīn the fights were two R a š ī d a l - D ī n, *SI* : 227-229; one fight according to K i r a k o s G a n j a k e c' i, *PH* : 201-204; P a t k a n o v (1873) : 3.

<sup>32</sup> Kirakos Ganjakec'i, *PH* :191.

<sup>33</sup> *Yüan shi* § 121 : 2975-2998.

<sup>34</sup> The information about the Mongols in the western chronicles before the military campaign in 1237 against Russia are very rare. Bezzola makes a good outline [B e z z o l a (1974)]. In the *Flores temporum auctore frater ord. minorum* [M G H S S (1879) : 226-250] 1201 year we read: "/.../ eodem anno Tartari sub montibus Indie in regione tartarea constituti occiderunt dominum suum David regem Indie, filium Iohannis presbiteri et ad depopulationem aliarum gencium processerunt."; *Ex annalibus islandicis* [M G H S S (1892) : 252-268] 1202 year: "/.../ Hofuz Tartaror."; *Annales Pegavienses* [M G H S S (1858) : 230-270] 1202 year: "/.../ hoc anno, ut a pleribus traditur, regnum tartarorum incium habuit, qui sub montibus Indie

Andrea Dandolo's *Chronica* referring to the years 1221-1222 tells us that the Mongols have destroyed Georgia and they have passed to Armenia Maior<sup>35</sup>. The *Annales Marbacenses*, referring to 1222, mention a strong army who left Persia, proceed through the neighbouring territories and suddenly disappear in order to go back to its own lands<sup>36</sup>.

According to Ibn al-Afīr, the Mongols leave Transcaucasia in the late 1221, early 1222. In the month of Ramaḍān 618 (19th October - 17th November 1221), in fact, they are still in the Arrān<sup>37</sup>. The Mongols' passage through the Caucasus<sup>38</sup> is characterised by two difficult moments which are mentioned by all the chroniclers' accounts. In both situations the Mongols show great cunning in overcoming the obstacles. The first difficult episode takes place when the Mongols address the Širvanšāh in order to obtain the permission to cross the mountain ridge. Only Ganjakec'i tells us that they fail to pass through

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in regione qui dicitur tartara constituti, dominum suum regem Indie David nomine, filium Iohannis presbiteri occidentes, ad depopulationem aliarum terrarum processerunt."; *Annales colmarienses minores* [M G H SS (1861) : 189-193] 1221 year: ".../ Tartari Ungariam vastaverunt"; *Gilberti chronicon pontificum et imperatorum romanorum, Continuatio IV* [M G H SS (1879) : 117-140], *Catalogus pontificum et imperatorum romanorum, ex casinensi, ut videtur, sumptus, a pluribus continuatus* [M G H SS (1869): 359-370] 1227 year: ".../sub isto [Gregorius IX] etiam exivit quendam maledicta gens, que vocatur Tartari"; *Ex Iohannis de Columpna mari historiarum* [M G H SS (1879) : 266-284]: ".../ qualiter gens tartarorum erumpens primo David potentissimum Indie regem subito agressi vicerunt, deinde circumstantes agressi provincias sue subiecerunt dicioni, maxime regione persarum".

<sup>35</sup> ".../ Tartari Georgiam vastare ceperunt; deinde intraverunt maiorem Armeniam, ubi est mons Ariruth, ubi requievit archa Noe, in cuius radice est prima civitas, quam edificavit Noe... *Andreae Danduli ducis Venetiarum chronica per extensum descripta* [R 1 S : 289, 1. 6 - 7]. It is also interesting to read the passage on page 299 (1, 13-14) where it is said that the successor of Činggis, here called Octota, send a 10,000 soldiers under the leadership of Gebesagada to explore the different Asian peoples: ".../ Hic cogitans Asiam sibi subicere, premisit X equitum ad explorandum gencium varietates et vires, eisque prefecit Gebesagada..."

<sup>36</sup> ".../ De terra persarum exercitus magnus valde et fortis egressus de finibus suis, per adiacentes sibi provincias transitum fecit /.../ in brevi reversi sunt ad propria... *Annales Marbacenses* // M G H S S (1861): 142-180.

<sup>37</sup> Ibn al-Afīr, *KT<sub>2</sub>*: 158.

<sup>38</sup> According to Ganjakec'i the Mongols first penetrate into Transcaucasia coming from the north, through Derbent. Schütz explains this assumption that differs from all the others with the sudden appearance of the Mongols. ".../ In 669, following the Armenian chronology /.../ a large number of well-equipped soldiers appeared suddenly and passed through Derbent gates to Albania in order to move to Armenia and Georgia. They quickly reached Tiflis and again returned back to Albania in the environs of amchor... P a t k a n o v (1874) : 1-2; S c h ü t z (1973) ; 255-256.



Derbent and are compelled to force their way through the mountains "filling the gorges with wood, stones, their own possessions, their horses and also the military engines"<sup>39</sup>. Ibn al-Atīr, who also in this case is the main source, gives us the most well-known version. He states that the Mongols, under the pretext of negotiating peace, obtain from the Širvanšāh 10 of his notables. After killing one of them and threatening to kill the others, they force the notables to show them the right way<sup>40</sup>. Abu 'l-Ġāzī and Rašīd al-Dīn confirm this story (both accounts more or less matching) while Ġuwayni simply mentions a device used by the Mongols<sup>41</sup>. Regarding the killing of one of the ambassadors sent by the Širvanšāh to negotiate peace, it is necessary to accept the evidence of the facts even if this is not the typical behavior of the Mongols. Certainly there are cases we know of in which the Mongols have broken their promises. It is enough to recall, for instance, the famous episode of the battle on the Kalka river against the Prince Mstislav Kievskij, the Princes Andrej and Aleksandr Dubrovskij<sup>42</sup>, or to remember the occasion in 1246 concerning the Golden Horde with Mikhail Černigovskij<sup>43</sup>. Nevertheless, rarely do we find a case in which the Mon-

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<sup>39</sup>/.../ The people who controlled Derbent did not let the Mongols pass. Therefore these latter passed across the Caucasus mountains, using difficult passages, filling the ravines with wood, stones, throwing their own things and their horses and their military engines... P a t - k a n o v (1874) : 4; K i r a k o s G a n j a k e c' i, *PH* : 191.

<sup>40</sup> /.../ The Tartars wanted to pass across the gorge, but they failed and sent some ambassadors to the Širvanšāh, who controlled the Širvan gorge, asking for his ambassadors in order to negotiate peace. The Širvanšāh sent 10 of his most important people. The Mongols killed one of them and told the others "if you show us the way, we will have pity on you, otherwise we will kill you as we have just killed this one" ... T i s e n h a u s e n (1884); 25.

<sup>41</sup> /.../ After taking Ilal, the Mongols took Nakhičevan. They conquered and devastated Afghanistan and moved towards Širvan. At Šemahi the Mongols captured 10 guides and after killing one of them, they threatened the others with death unless they were shown the right way. Then they continued their march, passing through Derbent. A b u ' l - Ġ ā z ī B a h ā d u r H ā n, *HMT* : 121, *HMT*<sub>2</sub> : 129-130; /.../ He (the Širvanšāh) sent 10 of the noblest men in his country. The Mongols killed one of them and told the others: "if you show us the way to Derbent we'll have pity on you, otherwise we will kill you all" ... R a š ī d a l - D ī n, *SI* : 228-229; /.../ Therefore they went to the Arrān and captured Bailaqa. Then they went on passing through Širvan and they reached Darband; within living memory no army had never gone along that way before, but using a device the Mongols could pass... Ġ u w a y n i, *GK* : 175.

<sup>42</sup> They surrendered themselves with the promise to be set free on payment of a ransom. Nevertheless, they were choked under the wooden boards where the Mongols sat to have lunch. *N P S* (1950) : 63.

<sup>43</sup> *P L D R* (1981) : 228-235. Mikhail, amongst other things, was responsible for the killing of some Mongolian ambassadors.

gols kill an ambassador<sup>44</sup>. Therefore, the Armenian chronicler's account, though to a certain extent more 'romantic' than the other, is closer to the image of the Mongols we are familiar with.

The second time that the Mongols meet with difficulties occurs when they enter the Alans' territories. The sources describe this area as 'densely populated'<sup>45</sup>. Moreover, Ibn al-Afīr tells us that by this time the Alans are already acquainted with the Mongols, so they were not taken by surprise. According to Ibn al-Atir, before the struggle with the Alans, the Mongols had robbed and murdered a certain number of Lezghins<sup>46</sup>.

It is not clear whether the Mongols are led into an ambush in the Alan territory by the Širvan guides or not, but according to Ibn al-Afīr's account, it seems that the Mongols systematically attack all the peoples they come across and therefore the struggle against the Alans can be seen as a standard behavior<sup>47</sup>. On the other hand, the Alans succeeded in forming an anti-Mongolian coalition whereby the Alanian troops joined with the Lezghins and the Qipčaq. No single party won the battle<sup>48</sup> and Abu 'l-Ġāzī simply states that the Mongols have been stopped by the Alan-Qipčaq coalition<sup>49</sup>. It is at this point that Mongolian diplomacy comes into play. Separate negotiations with the Qipčaq begin and in part due to the shared ethnic group and religious beliefs, but largely thanks to the expensive gifts received, the Qipčaq leave the Alans.

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<sup>44</sup> In the report of the battle on the Kalka river, the Mongols tell the Russians (through the second embassy): /.../ а есте послушали Половьчъ, а послы наша есте избили, а идете противу нас, тъ вы поидите, а мы васъ не заяли, да всѣмъ богъ. *NPS* (1950) : 62.

<sup>45</sup> *T i s e n h a u s e n* (1884) : 25; *R a š i d a l - D i n*, *Sl*: 229.

<sup>46</sup> /.../ After crossing the Širvan gorge, the Tartars moved through those regions which were inhabited by many different peoples, among which the Alans, the Lezghins and some Turkish tribes. The Tartars robbed and killed many Lezghins who were in part Muslims and in part infidels... *T i s e n h a u s e n* (1884): 25. Cf. *A b u ' l - F i d ā*: ... /.../ *A b u ' l - F i d ā*, *An*: 96.

<sup>47</sup> /.../ By attacking the inhabitants of every country they came across, the Mongols reached the Alans, who were in large number and had already heard about them... *T i s e n h a u s e n* (1884) : 25; according to Karamzin (who follows Deguignes), the Širvan guides bring the Mongols to the ambush laid by the Alans, the Qipčaq and peoples of the mountains; *K a r a m z i n* (1988) : 141; *D e g u i g n e s* (1757): 60.

<sup>48</sup> /.../ The Alans made any efforts; they assembled together a large number of Qipčaq and faced Tartars. But there was no winner... *T i s e n h a u s e n* (1884) : 25; *R a š i d a l - D i n*, *Sl*: 229.

<sup>49</sup> /.../ The Mongols were stopped by the Qipčaq together with the Alans. *A b u ' l - Ġ ā z i B a h ā d u r H ā n*, *HMT*:121, *HMT*<sub>2</sub>: 130.

Consequently, these latter are heavily defeated by the Mongols in 1222<sup>50</sup>. After liquidating the Alans, the Mongols turn their attention to the Qipčaq who failing to offer sufficient resistance to the enemy are largely slaughtered<sup>51</sup>. A small number of the Qipčaq seek refuge in the Russian territories, this being the way the news about the struggle between the Mongols and the Alans in the Caucasus reaches Russia. The following brief remark: «слышахом бо яко многы страны поплѣниша ясы обезы касогы и половьчъ безбожьныхъ множество избиша» is mentioned in 11 different chronicles without consistently variation as a passage from “*Bitva na reke Kalke*” (= the battle on the Kalka river<sup>52</sup>).

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<sup>50</sup> /.../ Then the Tartars sent word to the Qipčaq: “we belong to the same race while these Alans are not one of you. Therefore there is no reason why you help them. Your faith is different from their and we promise we will not attack you. On the contrary, we will give you as much money and clothing as you like. Let us see about the Alans”. The Qipčaq agreed on the money and clothing; they received what had been stated and left the Alans alone. Only at this point the Tartars attacked them and after defeating and slaughtering them they made many prisoners... T i s e n h a u s e n (1884) : 25; /.../Then the Mongols told the Qipčaq: “we are of the same tribe and come from the same race, while the Alans are strangers to you. Let’s come to an agreement in order not to harm each other. We will give you as much gold and clothing as you like, but you leave us the Alans. The Mongols sent the Qipčaq many things. The Qipčaq returned back. Then the Alans were defeated and all what had been willed by the fate about killing and sack, was accomplished by the Mongols... R a š ĩ d al-D ĩ n, *SI* : 229; /.../ Sūbā’ātāi bagatur sends the Qipčaq rich gifts by an ambassador who had to tell them that the Mongols are their brothers while the Alans are only strangers. So the Qipčaq shouldn’t help the Alans but instead follow the Mongols. The Qipčaq accepted Sūbā’ātāi’s proposal and left the Alans. When the Mongols saw that their enemy was weakened by this betrayal, they attacked and defeated them and made many slaves... A b u ’l-Ġ ā z ĩ B a h ā d u r H ā n, *HMT* : 121, *HMT*<sub>2</sub> : 130.

<sup>51</sup> /.../ (the Mongols) dashed at the Qipčaq, who had quietly gone away after the peace treaty. The Qipčaq realized what was happening only when it was late. The Mongols penetrated the lands, attacked the Qipčaq and took from them twice the amount given. Heard about it, the Qipčaq who lived far ran away without any struggles. Some of them hid among the marshes, other hid in the mountains and others ran to the Russian territory... T i s e n h a u s e n (1884) : 25 – 26; the fact that the Polovcy ran away without fighting is in contrast with the Russian version, *PSRL* (1962) : 740; /.../ The Qipčaq, trusting the peace treaty, spread everywhere in their land. The Mongols suddenly attacked them, killed everyone they found and took back all what had given them before. The Qipčaq who survived, ran to the Russian country... R a š ĩ d al-D ĩ n, *SI* : 229; Abu ’l-Ġāzī does not mention any struggle against the Qipčaq.

<sup>52</sup> *NPS* (1950) : 61; *PSRL* (1962) : 446; *PSRL* (1922) : 338; *PSRL* (1862) : 89; *PSRL* (1856) : 129; *PSRL* (1908) : 259; *PSRL* (1910) : 151; *PSRL* (1978) : 83; *PSRL* (1977) : 62; *PSRL* (1921) : 87; *PSRL* (1910<sub>2</sub>) : 69; the Jasy appear for the first time in the Russian chronicles in 6473 (965) when they are defeated by Svjatoslav : “В лѣто 6473. иде Святославъ на

The Qipčaq ask the Russian Princes for support. The Polovcy's defeat is synthesised in the well known sentence from the Russian chronicle: "Юрьи Кончакови бѣ болвше всихъ Половць не може стати противоу лицу и бѣгаючи же емоу и мнози избѣни быша до рѣки Днепра"<sup>53</sup>. And even more notorious is their request for help: "нашу землю днесъ отъяли, а ваша заутро възята будеть"<sup>54</sup>. The battle that takes place on the Kalka river<sup>55</sup> has been deeply analysed by the Russian historians; firstly in 1879 by Пловajскij, secondly by Sverdlov in 1963 and finally by Romanov in the 80s<sup>56</sup> in a series

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Козары. слышавше же Козари. изидоша противу. съ княземъ своимъ Каганомъ. и съступшася бит[ися]. и б[ы]вши брани. одолѣ Святославъ Козаромъ. и градъ ихъ и Бѣлу Вежую вся. [и] Ясы побѣди и Касогы". From: *PLDR* (1978), (Old Russian text) : 79 (Modern Russian); the Polovcy appear for the first time in 6562 (1054) year. Cf.: *Povest' vremennykh let* [*PLDR* (1978): 176 (Old Russian text): 177 (Modern Russian)]: приходи болушь с половьци. и створи Всеволодъ миръ с ними. и возвратишася вспать... The Polovcy carried out 11 raids in the Russian territory during the 11<sup>th</sup> century, 29 raids during 12<sup>th</sup> century and 7 raids during the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The term Obezы refers to the Abkhazy (more general to the Georgians) who are also mentioned in the Russian chronicles; the term Kasogy refers to the Cherkes, who are mentioned in the *Povest' vremennykh let* referring to 6473 : *PLDR* (1978) : 78; according to Vasmer it is possible to explain the ethnic name with the Ossetic *Kæsæg* "Cherkes", a short form of \**Cærkæsæg* from *cærgæs* "eagle"; on the contrary Abaev says that the origin of the term is not clear [A b a e v (1958)]; the adjective *Kasožiskij* appears in the *Povest' 6530 year* (= 1022): *Povest' vremennykh let* : 5530 (1022) слышавъ же се князь касожьскый Редедя; *P L D R* (1978) : 160-161, and in the *Slovo o polku Igoreve*: зарѣза Редедю прѣдъ Касожьскими (P.A. Косожьскими), *S P I* (1986) : 13.

<sup>53</sup> *P S R L* (1962<sub>2</sub>) : 740.

<sup>54</sup> *P S R L* (1962<sub>2</sub>) : 740.

<sup>55</sup> "It is likely to be the Kal'čik, a little river which is a tributary of the Kal'mius. The struggle took place at a distance of 224 km from the Aleksandrovskaia krepost', not far from today's Marjupol'. This distance is based on a calculation of the average march of an army riding horses who covers about 32 km a day. And it is also calculated considering that the distance between Aleksandrovskaia krepost' and the Kal'cik river is 196 versty and that one versta is 1,0668 km. [R o m a n o v (1983) : 22].

<sup>56</sup> The account of the battle on the Kalka river was analysed by D. I. Пловajскij [I l o v a j s k i j (1879)], M. V. Sverdlov [S v e r d l o v (1963) : 142-143] and in particular by V. K. Romanov in [R o m a n o v (1983); R o m a n o v (1981) : 79-104]; this report, which consists of three basic versions contained in the *Ipat'evskaja lelopiś', Lavrent'evskaja lelopiś'* and *Novgorodskaja pervaja lelopiś' staršego izvoda* is mentioned in 21 chronicles: *N P S* (1950) : 61-65; *P S R L* (1962<sub>2</sub>) : 740-745; *P S R L* (1962) : 445-447; *P S R L* (1848) : 28 (*Novgorodskaja četvertaja letopis'*) : 177-178 (*Pskovskaja pervaja letopis'*), *P S R L*, (1851) : 10 (*Pskovskaja vtoraja letopis'*) : 172-173 (*Sofijskaja pervaja lelopiś'*); *P S R L* (1856) : 129-133 (*Voskresenskaja letopis'*), *P S R L* (1862) : 89-92; *P S R L* (1863) : 27-28 (*Rogožskij letopisec*) : 335- 343 (*Tverskaja letopis'*); *P S R L* (1889) : 49-50; *P S R L* (1910) : 151-153; *P S R L*

of pieces. The currently accepted date for the battle is 1223<sup>57</sup>. This year is therefore the higher temporal limit of the events we have analysed so far. After the battle on the Kalka, the Mongols move towards Great Bulgaria which they reach at the end of 620, according to Ibn al-Afir. Here they are driven back by the enemy<sup>58</sup>; they fight the Kangli and in 1224 finally join Činggis qayan on the Syr Dar'ja... Činggis qayan spends this summer on the Irtyš and by 1225<sup>59</sup> is already back in the Tuula forest where he organizes his last military campaign against the Tunguts.

§ 4. Analysis of the sources brings us to the conclusion that Jäbä and Sübä'ätäi's expedition begins in 1220 and brings the Mongols to Transcaucasia by the end of the same year<sup>60</sup>. The Caucasus is crossed only once, in 1222<sup>61</sup>.

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(1908) : 259-261; *P S R L* (1910<sub>2</sub>) : 69-71; *P S R L* (1921) : 87-91; *P S R L* (1965) : 30 (*Vladimirskij letopiseč*); *P S R L* (1968) : 68; *P S R L* (1977) : 62-64 (*Kholmogorskaja letopis'*); *P S R L* (1978) : 83 (*Piskarevskij letopiseč*); *P S R L* (1980) : 120 (*Volynskaja kratkaja letopis'*).

<sup>57</sup> The sources do not state the same date for the struggle between the Russians and the Mongols. The *Chronicon Lyvoniae* suggests 1222 while the *Novgorodskaja pervaja letopis'* gives 1224. At the moment the historians' position on this subject is the following: Gitermann gives two possible dates, June, 16th 1224 and May, 30th 1223 but he does not say which date is the most reliable one [G i t e r m a n n (1980) : 80], V. V. Kargalov traces the struggle back to May, 31st 1223, taking in consideration the reconstruction of the movements of Jäbä and Sübä'ätäi's troops. But in doing so, the Russian pursuing of the Tartars would have lasted only 8 days instead of 12 days [K a r g a l o v (1967) : 64], Ilovajskij suggests May, 31st 1223 and his reconstruction of the events analyses only the Russian sources [I l o v a j s k i j (1879) : 704]; also Čerepnin [Č e r e p n i n (1977) : 189], Lemercier-Quelquejey [L e m e r c i e r - Q u e l q u e j a y (1971) : 26], and Tikhvinskij [T i k h v i n s k i j (1977) : 7] agree on May, 31st 1223 as the date of the struggle. Philips and Sacharov only say that the struggle took place in spring 1223 [P h i l i p s (1979) : 56; S a c h a r o v (1963) : 67], Spuler suggests June, 16th 1223 [S p u l e r (1985) : 25], Tikhomirov does not discuss the problem of the year, but he points out a mistake of the *Lavrent'evskaja letopis'*, which refers to May, 30th as St Jeremia's day that instead was the following day, May, 31st [T i k h o m i r o v (1951) : 241 -242], Hambis, Grousset and Bussagli agree on May, 31st 1222 [H a m b i s (1961) : 120; G r o u s s e t (1960) : 309; B u s s a g l i (1988) : 42].

<sup>58</sup> /.../ The inhabitants prepared some ambushes in different places, they attacked them and by letting them reach the ambush place, they took the enemies in the rear... T i s e n h a u s e n (1884) : 24; See Smirnov's work for an outline of the Mongolian military movements against the Bulgarija of Volga [S m i r n o v (1951)].

<sup>59</sup> P e l l i o t (1949), § 264 : 108.

<sup>60</sup> Therefore, every proposal which suggests the arrival of the Mongols in Transcaucasia in the mid-twenties of the 13th century is to be rejected.

<sup>61</sup> It is difficult to accept Gandjakeč'i's assumption about a twice crossing of the Caucasus [P a t k a n o v (1874): 1].

The Mongols fight and defeat the Alans. In the same year the Qipčaq are also defeated. In 1223 the Russian-Qipčaq coalition is slaughtered on the Kalka river<sup>62</sup>. In 1224 Jäbä and Sübä'ätäi's troops join Činggis qayan's hordes. The chronology of the struggle against the Alans is supported on one hand, by the eastern sources that witness the Mongols' presence in Arrān in the late autumn of 1221 and on the other hand by the Russian sources that mention the battle on the Kalka river in the spring of 1223. Any attempt to displace this date (1222) inevitably leads to the invalidation of both the Arabic-Persian group of sources and the Russian ones respectively.

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<sup>62</sup> The attempt to trace the battle on the Kalka river back to 1222 (which is based on the *Chronicon Lyvoniae*'s dating of the struggle against the Polovcy in 1221 /.../ Eodem anno [i.e. 1221] fuerunt Tartari in terra Valvorum paganorum, qui Parthi a quibusdam dicuntur /.../ et pugnauerunt Tartari cum eis et debellaverunt eos et percusserunt omnes in ore gladii, ad alii fugerunt ad Ruthenos, petentes auxilium ab eis. Et pervenit verbum per universam Rusciam, ut pugnarent cum Tartaris, et exiverunt reges de tota Ruscia contra Tartaros et non valuerunt pugnare cum eis, et fugerunt coram eis. Etcecidit rex magnus Mistoslawe de Kywa cum quadraginta milibus virorum, qui abstabant ei. Sed et alter rex Galatie Mysteslawe per fugam evasit. Et de regibus aliis ceciderunt in eodem bello circiter quinquagintaet persecuti sunt eos sex diebus, et interfecerunt ex eis plures quam centum milia virorum, quorum numerum deus solus novit, et ceteri fugerunt... *M G H S S* (1874 : 316) and on the Armenian chronicles suggestion of only one struggle against the Georgians at the end of 1220 is in contrast with the chronology of the Arabian-Persian sources. And it is also in contrast with the Russian chronicles (*Ipat'evskaja* and *Lavrent'evskaja*), especially *N P S* which states the struggle in year 1224.

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**ВОЕННАЯ ЭКСПЕДИЦИЯ ДЖЭБЭ И СУБЭДЭЯ НА ЗАПАД:  
ИСТОЧНИКИ ПО ПЕРВОМУ СРАЖЕНИЮ МЕЖДУ АЛАНАМИ И МОНГОЛАМИ**

После падения Самарканда в марте 1220 года Чингисхан собирает монгольское войско под командованием Джэбэ, Субэдэя и Тугучара и отправляет его преследовать 'Алā'-ал-Дин Мухаммад Хварезмшаха. Это войско не успевает настичь Хварезмшаха, так как он умирает в начале 1221 года на одном из островов Каспийского моря; тогда, получив разрешение Чингисхана, монголы продолжают свой путь в западном направле-

нии и достигают Закавказья. Согласно Ибн ал-Атиру, монголы покидают Закавказье в конце 1221 или в начале 1222 года, поскольку в месяце рамадан 618 года (19 октября – 17 ноября 1221 года) они еще находятся в Арране. Продвигаясь на север, монгольское войско сражается с алано-половецкой коалицией, но только после отступничества половцев им удается победить аланов (1222 г.). Оставив позади Кавказ, монголы побеждают и половцев. Некоторым половцам, бежавшим в Русь, удается получить поддержку русских. Русско-половецкая коалиция побеждается на реке Калке в 1223 году.

Цель настоящей работы – помочь прояснить хронологию алано-монгольского сражения, основываясь на систематическом сравнении монгольских, арабских, персидских и армянских источников, с одной стороны, с русскими и западными источниками, с другой стороны. Для того, чтобы подтвердить, что монголы под командованием Джэбэ и Субэдэя прошли через Кавказ один только раз с юга на север в 1222 году, в статье также рассматривается маршрут, проделанный данным войском.