

Mongol Caucasias

Brill's Inner Asian Library

Edited by

Michael R. Drompp
Devin DeWeese
Mark C. Elliott

VOLUME 41

The titles published in this series are listed at *brill.com/bial*

Mongol Caucasia

*Invasions, Conquest, and Government of a Frontier
Region in Thirteenth-Century Eurasia (1204–1295)*

By

Lorenzo Pubblici

Translated by

Andrew Smaldone



BRILL

LEIDEN | BOSTON

Cover illustration: Queen Tamar, 13th-century mural on the north walls of the Kuntsvisi Orthodox Monastery, Shida Kartli (Georgia).

The Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data is available online at <https://catalog.loc.gov>
LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2021048756>

Typeface for the Latin, Greek, and Cyrillic scripts: "Brill". See and download: brill.com/brill-typeface.

ISSN 1566-7162

ISBN 978-90-04-50352-6 (hardback)

ISBN 978-90-04-50355-7 (e-book)

Copyright 2022 by Lorenzo Pubblici. Published by Koninklijke Brill NV, Leiden, The Netherlands.

Koninklijke Brill NV incorporates the imprints Brill, Brill Nijhoff, Brill Hotei, Brill Schöningh, Brill Fink, Brill mentis, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Böhlau Verlag and V&R Unipress.

Koninklijke Brill NV reserves the right to protect this publication against unauthorized use. Requests for re-use and/or translations must be addressed to Koninklijke Brill NV via brill.com or copyright.com.

This book is printed on acid-free paper and produced in a sustainable manner.

To Alexandra



Contents

Preface to the English Edition	IX
Acknowledgments	XIII
Note on Transliteration	XIV
List of Maps	XV
Introduction	1
1 The Premises	6
1 Before Manzikert: The Caucasasia and the Byzantine Failure	8
2 The Causes of the Crisis	16
3 The Consequences of the Crusade: The Empire of Trebizond	25
2 North: The Pontic Steppes before the Mongol “Squall”: Cumans, Byzantium and Kievan Rus’	34
1 Some Remarks on the Origin of the Cumans	39
2 Early Raids	44
3 The Relationships with Neighbors: Byzantium and Rus’	49
3 Caucasasia, Nomadism and Immigration	61
1 The Cimmerian Bosphorus between Byzantium and the Second Nomadic Wave	61
2 Nomad Infiltrations into Georgia and Their Consequences	65
2.1 <i>Peoples of Georgia and Social Organization</i>	65
2.2 <i>The Cumans in Georgia</i>	69
2.3 <i>Nomadism in Georgia: Contrast and Integration</i>	71
4 Building a People	74
1 The Early Altaic Peoples: Acquisitions and Open Issues	74
2 Ethnogenesis and Nomadism: The Earliest Mutations	83
3 At the Root of Unification	91
4 Further Developments: The Concept of “Nomadic Feudalism”	95
5 The Instrument of the Army and the Realization of Solidarity	99
6 Nomadism and Slavery	109
5 A New Geography: The Mongol Expansion in the Caucasus and the Azov Basin	120
1 Overview	120
2 Times and Ways of the Western Invasion	122

3	In Pursue of the Sultan: The First Campaign against the Khorazm-Shah and the Invasion of Turkestan	127
4	The First Incursion in Caucasasia and the Azov Region (1220–1221)	135
5	The Second Mongol Incursion to the West and the Conquest of Caucasasia (1230–1236)	143
6	The Conquest of the Pontic Steppes and Rus' (1236–1242)	147
6	The Political Consequences of the Mongol Conquests and the Caucasian “Separation”	153
1	Plundering as a First Response	153
2	The Organizational Processes	155
3	The Reorganization of the Territory and the <i>New Caucasian Geography</i>	159
4	Caucasia and the Ilkhanate	163
5	The Ulus Jochi	175
7	The Religious Factor and the Problem of Integration after the Conquest	185
1	Cultural Premises	185
2	The Mongols, Islam, and the Armenian-Georgian Christianity until Ghazan’s “Choice” (1220–1295)	193
3	The Ulus Jochi and the Azov Region: A Reassessment of the Influences	206
8	Population and Coexistence: The Demographic Factor between Conquest and Reconstruction	212
1	Some Remarks on the Demographic Consequences of the Conquests	212
2	The Golden Horde and the Azov Region	214
3	Subcaucasias	217
	Conclusions: Results and Perspectives	222
	Bibliography	227
	Index	252

Preface to the English Edition

The Caucasus came into orbit of Mongol conquests in 1220. The first expedition to the West fell on the kingdom of Georgia and Armenia in the autumn of that year after troops led by generals Jebe and Sübe'tei had passed Tabriz and the Mughan plain. The final conquest of Caucasia occurred more than a decade later when the successors of Chinggis Khan carried on the vast plan of "universal" submission. In a few years, the Mongols subdued the entire region, from south to north, then turned against Rus' and its efficient commercial system. By 1240 and within a few years, Eastern and Central Europe also experienced the military effectiveness of these unknown people. Within the next two decades, Chinggis Khan's successors established the largest empire that has ever existed in human history, an *expanse of land* that from the borders of Western Latinity covered the whole of continental Asia without interruption.

For decades the Mongols have represented in Western historiography a fascinating but distant event, interesting but marginal.¹ The violent birth of the empire carried out by the successors of Chinggis Khan has been confined in an exotic space told by travelers whose reliability has often been questioned. The thorough study of that event brings to light a much more complex and close reality. The formation of the Mongol empire had enormous consequences on the history of the Middle Ages; direct and immediate implications in the lands where it physically fell, and mediated and dilated consequences in time where the armies of Genghis Khan and his successors did not arrive. The Caucasus, in particular, has always represented a frontier, a point of contact between peoples, a *hinge* between cultures.² In order to conquer Eastern Europe, the Mongols passed through the Caucasus and penetrated Asia Minor. Sweeping away the last resistance of the Seljuk power that had installed itself there, they preyed on the Byzantine Empire's weakness, exhausted by the disastrous Fourth Crusade of the early thirteenth century.

The Caucasus represents a decisive political and social junction between the West and Asia and one of the most sensitive historical links between Christianity and Islam. This book is the English version of a monograph that I published in Italian years ago. I found it necessary to reflect further on the origin of organized power structures at the root of the present situation in that region. In the last two decades and the last one, in particular, scholars have given growing attention to the history of the Mongols. Research has multiplied

¹ See on this the beautiful monograph of R. Minuti, *Oriente barbarico*.

² *Il caucaso. Cerniera fra culture*.

in Europe, in the United States, in Russia, and in all the countries directly or indirectly related to the empire created by Chinggis Khan. Many works have been relegated to the “local” dimension in the past years because they are written in languages difficult to access: Hungarian to Persian, Russian to Chinese. However, since the beginning of this century, we are witnessing a robust effort to translate these sources into English and an intense research program whose results are also increasingly published in English, thus accessible to the international scientific community. The list of initiatives that have stimulated academic reflection on this subject would be very long. See the bibliography, widely reviewed and updated, for a complete overview of publications. Yet, it is worthwhile to dwell on initiatives that, more than others, have made a fundamental contribution to the revision of the themes and problems connected to the constitution, life, and decline of the Mongol Empire. In 2003, thanks to the initiative of Nicola Di Cosmo, The Inner Asian Library was born, a prestigious series that has now reached 40 volumes published by Brill. With the same publisher, since 2007, Florin Curta is editing the series *East Central and Eastern Europe in the Middle Ages, 450–1450*, which has now reached more than 70 volumes.

One of the turning points in the field of Mongolian studies is undoubtedly the work of Thomas T. Allsen. In 2001, the American scholar published *Culture and Conquest in Mongol Eurasia*.³ Today, the book is a watershed in the research dedicated to the Mongols and represents the methodological reference for all those who intend to undertake this line of study. The novelty introduced by Allsen was an asymmetrical investigation, i.e., the study of Mongol history and power culture not from the perspective of those who suffered their domination but from an internal perspective. Allsen analyzed the available sources and developed a line of work undertaken in the sixties of the twentieth century by the great French turcologist Jean-Paul Roux for the religious and ideological aspect with his *La mort chez les peuples altaïques*.⁴ It took a few years for Allsen’s analysis to be elaborated and finally absorbed by the new generation of scholars. Nevertheless, within a decade, the influence of the American historian’s work was felt. Many books were influenced by Allsen’s method in the early 2000s; the reader will find ample references both in the text and in the bibliography. Another pioneering study was that of Peter Jackson, who in 2005

3 Cambridge University Press 2001.

4 *La mort (la survie) chez les peuples altaïques anciens et médiévaux d’après les documents écrits*, Maisonneuve et Larose 1963. On the importance of Allsen’s work and the status of Mongol studies, see Biran, “The Mongol Empire,” 1021–1033.

published *The Mongols and the West (1221–1410)*,⁵ and showed how close the Mongol experience was to the Christian West and how the opening of international transit routes – itself a consequence of the establishment of a coherent political power extended over two continents – was decisive for the development of a new commercial season for Europe. Jackson's work completed the investigation begun many years earlier by Igor De Rachewiltz with his *Papal envoys to the Great Khans*.⁶

A further step forward in Mongolian history was taken in 2009 when Nicola Di Cosmo, Allen J. Frank, and Peter B. Golden edited *The Cambridge History of Inner Asia. The Chinggisid Age*,⁷ a volume in which the historical synthesis and the depth of investigation merged perfectly, giving scholars an indispensable tool for this field of study. With regard more specifically to the Caucasus, it is worth mentioning the beautiful book published in 2011 by the Mongolian Armenian historian Bayarsaikhan Dashdondog: *The Mongol and the Armenians (1220–1335)*,⁸ thus establishing a fundamental point of reference for studies in this field. An expert historian and a profound connoisseur of the medieval Caucasus, B. Dashdondog has carried out extensive research on Armenian sources, presenting a very complex local reality during the Mongol domination and shedding light on the relationship between the indigenous ruling class and the new rulers. In addition to the quality of the research, Dashdondog's merit was to make available in English sources otherwise difficult to access. Finally, however, we should not forget the powerful work of “indirect” translation of Armenian authors undertaken since the 1980's by the Armenianist Robert Bedrosian, whose texts are all available online.

Since 2012 the Hebrew University, in which Michal Biran and Reuven Amitai, two of the most prominent scholars of Mongolian history, have managed a very ambitious project whose results are already tangible. *Mobility, Empire, and Cross-Cultural Contacts in Mongol Eurasia* is a container that has converged initiatives of great importance: international conferences, publications, seminars, databases, workshops, and the upcoming *Cambridge History of the Mongol Empire*. In 2012, in Wiesbaden, a miscellaneous volume explicitly

5 Taylor and Francis (Repr. Routledge 2014). In 2107, Jackson published *The Mongols in the Islamic World*.

6 Stanford 1971. The fundamental contribution of Igor De Rachewiltz to Mongol studies lays into the massive effort that gave birth to the most reliable edition and the most complete comment to the *Secret History of the Mongols* (paperback edition in 2 vols. Leiden: Brill, 2006).

7 Cambridge University Press, 2009.

8 Brill 2011.

dedicated to Mongols and the Caucasus was published, demonstrating that this field of study has a growing interest.⁹

In light of the many publications and the research that scholars from all over the world are still carrying out in their respective departments, I thought it appropriate to revise the text of this book. Today, much more than in the past, specialists understand that only teamwork and an interdisciplinary approach can give noticeable results on such a vast and complex historical experience as the Mongol Empire. New technologies have made it possible to broaden the relationships between scholars who, only a few years ago, would have had great difficulty in getting to know one another. International collaborations are increasing every year, and the relationships between academics of different disciplines, languages, and cultures are growing.

A traditional view of European history as detached from Asia is changing, fading, replaced by a more “integrated” idea of Middle Ages. The Caucasus was the contact zone of adjacent cultural, political, and economic spheres. Its history concerns the present. Today, more than ever, I believe it is necessary to look at this region with the gaze of those who want to understand, with the avidity to know better the history of men and cultures to which a double thread, fortunately, ties us together.

9 Tuback, Vashalomidze and Zimmer, *Caucasus/Der Kaukasus*.

Acknowledgments

This English edition, widely revised and updated, is published thanks to many friends and colleagues. Their constant support and encouragement have been decisive. The debt of gratitude that I have to them cannot be paid off with the few lines that follow. Nevertheless, it is my pleasure to express my profound thanks to them because this study would never have come to an end or perhaps would have had a beginning otherwise.

The first thought goes to Mara and Renato because they made everything possible. After that, my thoughts go and have often gone in the latest years, to Dino Pubblici and Deanna Tossani, whose absence still weighs too heavily.

First and foremost, I want to honor the memory of Renato Risaliti and Giovanni Cherubini, teachers and mentors. I owe them much more than I can express, ever and forever. I wish to thank Andrew Smaldone, whose kind and generous support has always been a “safe port” for me. Furthermore, it is my pleasure to express my profound gratitude to Nicola Di Cosmo and Andrea Zorzi for believing in this project and providing me with their constant support. A special thank goes to Sergej Pavlovič Karpov, Scott Blanchard, Ross Caputi, and Clarissa Weis for their competent and decisive help. I wish to express thanks to colleague and friend Marcello Garzaniti, who agreed to read the manuscript and gave me valuable advice. All the inaccuracies and limitations of the book are, however, attributable only to me. Furthermore, I am grateful to the staff of the State Archives of Genoa and Venice, always kind and efficient. Also I want to thanks Fulvio Guatelli for his incessant support.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to Patricia Radder, to the staff at Brill, and to the anonymous readers who have believed that this research could be a valuable contribution to the knowledge of Mongol history.

Firenze

June 2021

Note on Transliteration

Since the volume deals with themes linked to profoundly different cultural realities, transliteration is an unsolvable problem with a coherent system. Therefore, I decided to adopt solutions that are not always rigorous, preferring legibility over scientific consistency.

1. Dates are generally given according to the Gregorian calendar. Arabic dates are given when they have special relevance and are preceded by the letter H. (hijrî)
2. For Russian names, I have adopted the system of the Library of Congress.
3. For the Armenian names, I have adopted a “Latinized” transliteration for better readability, instead of using the Hübschmann-Meillet-Benveniste system. The same for the Georgian alphabet, for which I did not follow the criteria of the *Revue des études géorgiennes et caucasiennes*; instead, I have privileged a phonetic form, the most readable.
4. For Arabic and Persian names I have followed the version given by the *Encyclopedia of Islam* and the *Encyclopedia of Iran*, English editions both cited in the bibliography.
5. As for Mongolian, I have followed C. Atwood’s *Encyclopedia of Mongolia and the Mongol Empire*, cited in the bibliography. However, also in this case, I have sometimes adapted the transliteration to better readability.

Maps

- 1.1 The Byzantine Empire in ca. 1025 11
- 1.2 The Oghuz and Seljuk raids in eleventh-century Asia Minor 15
- 1.3 The Caucasus after the Fourth Crusade 22
- 1.4 The Empire of Trebizond and its neighboring states in the aftermath of the Fourth Crusade 29
- 1.5 The Caucasus and Asia Minor at the death of Queen Tamar (1213) 31
- 2.1 Cuman settlements in the Northern Pontic steppe 41
- 2.2 Cuman settlements in the northern Pontic steppes, 11th–12th centuries 57
- 3.1 The Khazars and the Caucasus 63
- 4.1 The Orkhon Valley in the 12th century 78
- 5.1 China and the northern frontier in the late 12th century 123
- 5.2 The Mongol invasion of Central Asia 132
- 5.3 The first Mongol invasion of Caucasia, 1221–1223 137
- 5.4 The Mongol invasion of Rus' 150
- 6.1 Georgia and the Caucasus after the Mongol conquest 169
- 6.2 The Ulus Jochi in the 1260s 178

Introduction

Europe has often shaped its opinion of the Caucasus in relation to contemporary events. Caucasia represents a frontier, a place where East and West found a point of contact in the Middle Ages; it is a *hinge* between two cultural areas that have been able to develop a dialogue over time. Because of these specific geographical and temporal conditions, the Caucasus deserves to be studied in its historical peculiarity.

The “east” is an abstract concept, perhaps a cultural category, which acquires vigor and concreteness when one can problematize it and understand not only its internal events but also the many influences it had on Western European history. This study is an attempt to study the origin and development of the fascinating empire created by the Mongols and to investigate its impact in an area that has constituted, for at least three centuries, a point of contact in addition to being a privileged amalgamation of two distinct social, political, and cultural contexts. The Caucasia that constitutes the object of this book is not a rigid geographical concept. It is loosely defined in this study not just as the mountain range and the region surrounding it; the Caucasus, which here I sometimes call Caucasia – perhaps with some approximation – is considered as an area to descend from the Sea of Azov southwards to include present-day Georgia, forming an authentic natural barrier protecting the East. Even in the 12th century, an image of the Mongols was taking shape among Europeans that underscored the former’s cultural differences as a nomadic, warrior culture. Indeed, the Mongol domination was not the first time that nomadism and sedentary societies encountered and interacted; however, it was because of the Mongol invasion -a disruptive event – that Caucasia underwent continued domination by a single organized political power that for decades embodied within itself characteristics of both models of social organization, nomadic and fixed. The genesis of this process and its outcomes constitute the primary object of the book.

Geographically, Caucasia is the region that extends north and south of the parallel mountain ranges known as the Caucasus. Its longitudinal extension is an isthmus separating the Black Sea from the Caspian Sea and Europe from Asia. It is situated, from north to south, between the Sea of Azov and northern Armenia. Its maximum width from the coast of the Black Sea to the Caspian Sea is 500 km. The Black Sea coast is altogether about 1,500 km, including the Sea of Azov (a little less, 1360 km, measuring the coast of Caspian Caucasia). Within these limits, Caucasia covers an area of more than 465,000 km². The Sea of Azov is a 42,000 km² basin of water. The terrain surrounding it is mainly sandy,

the coast jagged. It is almost uninhabitable during the winter months due to low temperatures and the consequent freezing of its waters. The Black Sea has a water surface area of 420,000 km². At its deepest point, it reaches 2245 m, but on average, it does not exceed 1200 m.

The Black Sea is home to some of the longest rivers in Europe: Dnepr, Danube, Dniestr, Bug, and, indirectly, the Don. The Caspian Sea is different. It is a closed lake whose surface is wide (438,000 km²). It receives the longest river in Europe, the Volga, whose delta waters are marshy and shallow. It is in the middle of the Uralic-Caucasian depression. Its waters are not deep; at most, they reach 900 meters, but we should now update the data daily because the indiscriminate exploitation of its covered land for oil extraction is destroying the ecosystem. In the north, there are no depths of more than 10 m, where the overall average is only 180 m.

Unlike other ethnic-political realities embedded in similar environmental contexts (i.e., Kievan Rus' or the region of Tibet) – where there has been a sort of supranational ideological integration under the sign of religions – in the Caucasus, particularisms have survived and sometimes even accentuated. It is an extensive area, but no more than Kievan Rus', nor some Central Asian states. In a talk given in Spoleto in 1995, Maurizio Tosi, archaeologist and profound connoisseur of Asia, pointed out how in the region of Tibet Mahayana-Vajrayana Buddhism, brought from northern India around the 7th century BC, initiated an integrative push so that in that area an extraordinary cultural homogeneity can still be seen today.¹ Despite the repeated penetration of the three great monotheistic religions in the Caucasus this did not occur. None succeeded in prevailing. How much have the incursions of nomadism, and in particular, the Mongols, influenced this?

The Mongols reached the Adriatic coast during the second campaign to the West, but the westernmost border of the empire became Caucasia. To determine the consequences that the Mongol invasion had on it, I believe it is necessary to start from the Fourth Crusade, a disruptive event that substantially changed the region's political balance, favoring the advance of nomadism. The Crusade was a consequence, not the cause of the Byzantine capacity to contain the advance of nomadism. The weakening of the Byzantine Empire had begun well before the fatal year 1204.

I tried to investigate the evolution of Byzantine politics and its consequences by looking to the East, focusing on relations between Byzantium, Georgia, and Armenia, only touching on the well-known events that led to the realization

¹ M. Tosi, *Dalla tribù all'impero. Riflessioni sul Caucaso, le steppe e i meccanismi dell'evoluzione sociale alla luce dei dati archeologici*, «Il Caucaso», pp. 246–270 alla p. 248.

of the “diverted” Crusade. I then decided to address the theme of what I consider the last great nomadic wave from the Russian-Southern steppes to the Caucasus before the Mongol experience, represented by the settlement of the Cumans. Following a diacronic rather than chronological order, I then dwelt (chapter three) on the relationship between the Kingdom of Georgia and nomadism in the years between the Crusader experience. The investigation of the traditional Mongol society, the original social context in which the union of tribes was born, is the object of Chapter Four. The social organization of the original can help elucidate many of the political and cultural dynamics that characterized the Mongol Empire after its complete formation. The theme of ethnogenesis and state formation has been extensively studied both by historians and anthropologists. In particular, the work undertaken in the 1970s by Henri J.M. Claessen and Peter Skalník gave new life to the investigation of the birth of collective power centers.² In this circumstance, I was interested in focusing on how a complex amalgam of distinct human groups turned into a people that, although intrinsically heterogeneous and diverse, was perceived by its contemporaries as a whole.

In the following chapters, I tried to draw a general picture of the Mongol conquests as a wave that started in the Far East and reached Europe in a few decades. The political consequences were as considerable as the cultural ones. The seventh chapter focuses on the religious factor, the alleged tolerance of the Mongolian ruling class towards local worship, and many other issues related to this aspect, which has often been the subject of misunderstandings.³ The eighth chapter of the book focuses on the demographic consequences of the invasion. Pre-crisis factors that accentuated its destructive character are treated from a historical perspective beyond the limits of this book itself (until the invasions of Tamerlane in 1395).

The vastness of the area considered and its exceptional ethnic-cultural diversity imposed some choices that could be discussed at length. Yet, today more than ever, there is a lack of contextualization of the Western commercial experience within the complex paradigm between the dominant ethnic element, the one characterized by the nomadic model, and the “visible” Western element, the one we can study better thanks to the written memory left by the actors of that experience.

2 Claessen and Skalník, *The Early State* 1978; Di Cosmo, “State formation,” 1–40; Kradin and Barfield, *Nomadic Pathways*, 2015; Barfield, *The Perilous Frontier*, 1992.

3 See especially DeWeese, *Islamization*, 2010.

The Mongol conquest and government have often been considered within the limits of an inter-pretentious dualism (the yoke/revolution/innovation), which I hope I have, at least in part, reassessed.⁴

The reason why I decided to frame my research from 1204 to 1295 is only in part political. I have already said about the *terminus ante quem*: the fall of Constantinople is the symbol of a coherent power – the collapse of the Eastern Roman Empire – leaving a void that is in some ways unbridgeable (and for almost two centuries unfilled). Nevertheless, it is known that the collapse of the empire was the ultimate step in a decline that had begun well before 1203; the process that determined its fall was long and complex, but these dates are conventional and valuable for the scholar who must circumscribe the limits of his research chronologically. The final term of the research, 1295, is the year in which the Ilkhanate, led by Ghazan Ilkhan, definitively took its way, inaugurating a series of reforms that made it a state in full force. The new Ilkhan adopted Islam as the state's official religion, and the rupture with the Ulus Jochi, already widely incubated in the border wars right on the Caucasus line, was complete (the year before, 1294, the Great Khan Qubilai had died).

Between the late 13th and early 14th century, Europe and Asia peaked in their economic and commercial development. The fourteenth century saw both the height of growth and the beginning of a generalized crisis that hit, albeit at different times and with different intensity, the entire Eurasian continent. From the thirties of the fourteenth century, the security guaranteed by the presence of a comprehensive and coherent center of hegemonic power as the Mongol Empire underwent a decline; the trajectories of international trade changed, narrowing merchants' range of action. More than the effects of the so-called *Pax Mongolica*, we should investigate the consequences of its termination. The inexorable disintegration of the Mongol khanates caused political instability, wars and, as a consequence, famine, and epidemics, the most notorious of which was the Black Plague in the mid-century. The severe shortage of labor in Europe and Asia, combined with increasing difficulty finding the most valuable merchandise, prompted trade professionals to intensify the investments in buying and selling slaves. In general, long-range trade resumed – perhaps never completely stopped – despite the many successive waves of the epidemic, but the volume of trade declined structurally and never reached previous levels.

In 1395 the Timurid invasions struck the Caucasia. Tamerlane's armies swarmed from Bukhara to Tbilisi, from Sarai to Tana, partly exhuming the destruction that only a century and a half before had been brought by Chinggis

4 Pubblici, "Rus/Russia," 299–319.

Khan and his generals. It was an event with very different characteristics. The conquests of Tamerlane, a fascinating and controversial figure, represent in some ways the point where a circle closes. The consequences of the Mongol conquests lasted for centuries after, until at least the 17th century, when the Stroganov, a family of Russian merchants – helped by an irregular army of peasant origins fighting under the name of Cossacks – defeated the army of the last Khanate, that of Siberia, crowning the rise of Moscow and giving the Tsar (Ivan IV) a Tricontinental State.⁵

This work is full of limitations and, on the other hand, could not be otherwise given the complexity of the subject covered. I have focused on those aspects that I believe can illustrate the general phenomenon. I hope that the results serve as compensation for where I have not fully satisfied even my own expectations.

About two centuries ago, Alexander Pushkin turned to the Caucasus to highlight the precocious moral aging of his young contemporaries with these verses: “In Russia the distant road leads,/To the country where ardent youth/He proudly exploits without worries/Where he knew his first joy/Where he loved many dear things, Where he welcomed proud suffering” and further on: “He tested men and the world,/ He knew the price of a fallacious life”. Even today, for those who love that land, the price of the “fallacious life” is the image of the “first joy”. Sadly.

5 Renato Risaliti, profound connoisseur of Russia, used this definition for the first volume of his *Storia problematica* (2002).

The Premises

Although I have the fate of my days on the dawn,
On the southern mountains, cut off from you,
To remember them forever, there must be a time:
How sweet song of my homeland,
I love thee, Caucasus!

M.JU. LERMONTOV, *The Caucasus*



The territory encompassing the present-day southern Georgian and Southern Russian borders is wrapped by the intersection of two major waterways, the Don and the Volga to the north and by the Caspian Sea to the east. It has never had a political-administrative unity of its own that justifies a coherent discussion in its own right and is comprised of a part of the Pontic basin that was never under Byzantine authority, except in some areas and for short periods. Nevertheless, the political events of the Eastern Roman Empire have influenced its development. Caucasia affected Byzantine political events, as it was the setting of wars and the object of violent disputes. The region hosted the eastern frontiers of the Roman Empire; nomadic communities settled there and underwent the advance of Turkic-Mongolian populations. The Caucasian region was a fertile ground for trade between Western Europe and Asia and the gateway to the Far East. Today we can still see traces of these activities in the present-day socio-cultural physiognomy of the peoples living there.

In 1008 king Bagrat III of the Bagratid branch of Georgia brought together the Abkhazian territories, imposed his authority, and unified the Central-Southern Caucasus. North of the Black Sea, in the second half of the 10th century, the Byzantine Empire conquered the city of Maurokastron. It would remain under Greek authority for a long time, except for a short occupation by the Varangians, which ended when their sovereign, Svyatoslav, made peace with the Byzantine emperor Basil II. The Greek sovereign also placed Ani and the Bagratid kingdom of Armenia (1045) under his protection. After 1016 this

sovereignty extended to Matracha, Zichia, and all of Khazaria.¹ Scholarship about this toponym is vast. It was likely located at the mouth of the river Don, lands once under Khazar rule, and later part of the Byzantine Empire.

The 11th century, as we shall later see, marked a profound break in the continuity of Byzantine foreign policy. The nomadic incursions, combined with the internal crisis of the Empire, had profoundly weakened its foundations. In 1021, the first Turkic nomadic advances took place in Armenia. It was a severe blow to the Empire's ability to secure a valid defense for the territory. In the same period, Pechenegs and Uzes spread from the steppes of present-day southern Ukraine. However, the situation changed soon afterward. In 1064 the Qipchaqs pushed the Pechenegs and Uzes across the Danube, and the Oghuz Turks² (from which the Seljuks originated) attacked southern Georgia.³ In

-
- 1 Following the naval expedition that Byzantium had sent to Khazaria, and that broke the resistance of one of the last strongholds of the ancient Turkic-Jewish empire in the region that had been the Cimmerian Bosphorus of the Greeks (Bratianu, *La Mer Noire* cit., p. 158). I'm having trouble with the previous sentence. Do you mean that Khazaria had been the Cimmerian Bosphorus? No. The Cimmerian Bosphorus was a stronghold of Khazaria that the Byzantine took in the operations that lead to the submission of all Khazaria (a much wider area) Bratianu mentions the name of an archon and a strategist placed by the empire to administer the recent acquisitions around the Kerch Strait. Byzantium reaffirmed its sovereignty over this region.
 - 2 On the Oghuz see Şahin, "The Oghuz Turks," 55–84; Levi, "Turks and Tajiks," 15–31; Golden, "Some thoughts," 136–57. Scholarship on the Seljuks is vast. See Agadžanov, *Očerki istorii*, 1969; Bosworth, *The Ghaznavids* 1963; Vyronis, *Studies on Byzantium* 1981²; C.Cahen, "The Turkish Invasion," 135–176; Köprülü, *The Seljuks of Anatolia*, 1992; Gumilëv, *Drevnie Tjurki*, 1993; Peacock and Yildiz, *The Seljuks of Anatolia*, 2013; Peacock, *The Great Seljuk Empire* 2015; Beihammer, *Byzantium*, 2017.
 - 3 The Persian historian Ibn al-Athir informs us of these facts in detail. The work of Al-Athir is monumental and was published for the first time in a Western language by C.I. Tornberg (Ibn al-Athir, *Ibn al-Athiri chronicon quod Perfectissimum inscribitur*, I, 1851–1853, II, 1867–1876); this edition is incomplete. The most accessible translation, until a few years ago, was the one published in RHC: Hist. Orient, II, 1887. The most recent translation is the one published by Ashgate edited by D.S. Richards in three parts (3 vol., Aldershot 2006–2010). On Caucasia, I refer to the latter and to the extensive passages translated and published by M. Defremery, *Fragments de Geographes et d'Historiens arabes et persans inedit*, "JA", IV series, 13 (hereinafter Ibn al-Athir, I) 1848 and 14 (hereinafter Ibn al-Athir, II) 1849. According to Ibn al-Athir the attack of the Oguz intervened after the call by the Muslim-handed inhabitants of Tblisi. The Persian historian says: "In the year 429 the king of Abkhazians besieged the city of Tblisi. The inhabitants opposed a fierce resistance [...] then the besieged sent a deputation to Azerbaijan to beg for Muslims' help. When the Ghuzz entered Azerbaijan, and the Abkhazians became aware of their approach and the evils they had caused the Armenians, they quickly dismantled their camps in front of Tblisi for fear of the Ghuzz": Ibn al-Athir cit., I, p. 483.

the East, the situation was, if possible, even worse: in 1048, Turkmen nomads invaded the Byzantine (district) of Armenia. In 1054, a new Turkic invasion advanced into the Caucasus and Armenia in particular. A few years later, the Oghuz pushed as far as Sivas into Central Anatolia. In addition to these events, in 1064, the Seljuk sultan laid siege to Ani. The Byzantine garrison abandoned the city, which fell, being unable to defend itself effectively. 1071 was the year of the well-known Byzantine defeat at Manzikert. In this period, many political boundaries around the Black Sea underwent significant adjustments, and Byzantium lost part of its borderlands. Even if the Empire could still exert weighty authority over its subject territories, the nomadic invasions had highlighted its limitations, especially militarily, on the peripheral regions.

1 Before Manzikert: The Caucasia and the Byzantine Failure

The history of the eastern coast of the Black Sea – and Caucasia in particular – was closely connected to the Ancient Roman Empire since 64 AD, the year when Rome annexed western Georgia. The following year the Romans annexed the eastern part of the Caucasus, Iberia or Kartli, and in 72 AD, Armenia met the same fate.⁴

The political developments of the Empire characterized the historical progress of Caucasia, determining its borders and cultural influences. After two decades in which the region oscillated between Achaemenian and Roman influence, the crisis of the structure built by the latter left the western heritage in the hands of Byzantium. In 629, Emperor Heraclius defeated Iran, and much of Iranian Armenia came under direct Greek influence. The Arab occupation in the second half of the 7th century brought about a new arrangement of power, and the territory south of Lake Sevan came under Islamic authority. Since Antiquity Georgia consisted of two politically distinct parts: the Pontic or Western part (Colchis for the Greek world, Egrisi for the Georgians⁵) and the Eastern one (Iberia for the Greeks and later Kartli after the supremacy of the Kartveli people⁶). The Laz princes from the south conquered the Colchis and gained new autonomy with the constitution of the kingdom of Lazica, which was a vassal of the Roman Empire. At the same moment when Armenia came under Byzantine rule, the Laz dynasty disappeared, which greatly benefited the small principalities whose most noteworthy action was the handing

4 See D. Braund, *Georgia in Antiquity: A History of Colchis and Transcaucasian Iberia, 550 BC–AD 562*, Oxford, 1995, chapter five: pp. 152–170.

5 On the colonization of Colchis in ancient times, see Ibid. pp. 87–117.

6 C. Toumanoff, *Caucasia and Byzantium*, «Traditio», 27, 1971, pp. 111–159, p. 119; Id., *Medieval Georgian Historical Literature (VIIth–XVth Centuries)*, «Traditio», 1, 1943, pp. 139–182, pp. 141–142, p. 142, note 6.

over of the kingdom to the Abkhazian princes. Abkhazia – located northwest of present-day Georgia and south of the Caucasus Mountains – withstood many attempted invasions by the Umayyads of Murwan-Kru.⁷ However, these failed after the Arab occupation of the Caucasian passes of Darial and Derbend. Then, the troops of Murwan-Kru attacked Sukhumi but went no further than that.

During the Khazar period,⁸ Abkhazia achieved a comprehensive form of independence, also thanks to well-constructed relationships with the powerful Turkic Empire. The Abkhazian prince Leo II married the princess of Abkhazia, taking the title of king and establishing the capital in Kutaisi.⁹

Between the middle of the 9th and the middle of the following century, Abkhazian rulers ruled not only over Abkhazia but also over Mingrelia, Imereti, and Kartli. The kingdom of Abkhazia/Abasgia, established in 790, unified the two regions in 1008 and gave life to economic and cultural prosperity. A robust Byzantine influence in Georgia characterized the transition between the Laz and Abkhazian dynasties. Between the eighth and ninth centuries, the Byzantine Empire tried to prevent the kingdom from gaining autonomy, but the alliance of the Abkhazs with the Khazar Empire held back their conquering ambitions. They appointed a viceroy with vast powers in Iberia who was disliked by the local population because of the imbalance between the burden he had to impose and his poor connection with the territory. He, therefore, showed strong loyalty and dependence towards the empire because Byzantium appointed him. The viceroy of Iberia also ruled over northern Armenia, Lazica, and Albania. His tasks were very similar to those of the Byzantine exarch.¹⁰

7 See R.G. Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, Bloomington 1994; albeit old, still useful is the essay of M.F. Brosset, *Histoire de la Géorgie depuis l'antiquité jusqu'au XIX. siècle*, Paris 1849–1858, I, pp. 237–43; *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 11 voll., vol. I., London 1960, pp. 100–101. For a detailed research on medieval Georgia see W.E.D. Allen, *A History of the Georgian People: from the beginning down to the Russian conquest in the nineteenth Century*, London 1932 (rist. 1971); see also G. Charachidzé, *Introduction à l'étude de la féodalité géorgienne*, Paris-Genève 1971.

8 On the Khazar Empire, see Golden, *An Introduction*, 1992; Magomedov, *Obrazovanie kharzarskogo*, 1983; Dunlop, *The history of the Jewish Khazars* 1954; Dunlop, “The Khazars,” 325–355. More recent, and comprehensive is Golden and Ben Shammai, *The World of the Khazars*, 2007. Well documented is the research of B. Zhivkov (Zhivkov, *Khazaria* 2015), especially the abundant bibliography. Still useful is the entry *Khazars* in the “Encyclopaedia Britannica”, 1973. For what concerns the most important source for Khazar studies – *The Khazar correspondence* – see Kokovcov, 1932. See also Golden, “Khazaria and Judaism,” 127–156. Controversial is the essay of Arthur Koestler (*The Thirteenth Tribe*, 1976).

9 *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, vol. I., London 1960, p. 101; Brosset, *Histoire de la Géorgie* 5, LXV–LXVIX.

10 Toumanoff, “Caucasia and Byzantium,” 12–122.

The wars carried out between the 8th and 9th centuries had profoundly changed the demographic balance of the region. Many Georgian nobles lost their lives in battle or had been replaced by the Byzantines to better control the territory. These years saw the emergence of ruling classes whose dominant position was not threatened from within thus, their ascent found less competition. The population yearned for an indigenous dynasty rather than an external ruler, especially not one sent by the same Empire that boasted authoritarian control in a remote territory and that for years had waged war on that very people. The Bagratids occupied the territories of the North and West.¹¹ The same fate fell to other regions that, one after the other, came within the sphere of influence of local powers and gradually became stronger over time. The Artsruni took over part of the southwestern territories and installed the kingdom of Vaspurakan. The Syuniks obtained the eastern part of the principality of Siunik, and the Mamikonians imposed their authority on other territories in present-day southwestern Armenia. The Guaramids, a branch of the Chosroids, proved incapable of monopolizing the office of the Viceroy of Iberia. Since 628, in Albania the Garman princes were the most prestigious house and made the office of viceroy almost hereditary.

Among all these groups, whose authority was limited, the Bagratids eventually emerged and made the office of the Viceroy of Armenia hereditary from 806. A few years later, in 813, the Georgian branch of the Bagratids succeeded in doing the same in Iberia.¹² Between 884 and 888, Armenia and Iberia obtained an informal self-nomination from the Byzantine Empire. At first, Byzantium accepted this *de facto* situation, but this would not last long. The Bagratid's supremacy was hardly recognized by the other principalities, who were thus pushed into tightening their ruling prerogatives and retreated towards greater independence from the ruling dynasty. In 908, the Artsruni, helped by the Arabs, formed a separate kingdom in their territories in Vaspurakan; in 970, the Syunik princes followed suit. This fracture also affected the Bagratid dynasty, which split into several branches. The younger branch, in particular, was divided into two distinct parts: the principality of Kars, since 961, and the principality of Lori, since 982. The Artsruni maintained under their authority the territories of Taraun, Speri, Moxoene. The kingdom of Armenia was reduced to the principality of Ashot II (see map 1.1).¹³

11 Toumanoff provided the names of the districts, on which the Bagratids extended their authority: *Arsarunik, Siracene, Tayk Bagravendene, Taraun*. If we picture all of them on a map of Caucasus, we would appreciate the considerable dominion that this family realized in rather short timing. See also Adontz, "Notes Arméno-byzantines," 185ff.

12 C. Toumanoff, "The Bagratids of Iberia," 11–12; Toumanoff, "Caucasia and Byzantium," 122.

13 For a general picture of the events, see Toumanoff, "Caucasia and Byzantium," 125–127 e Bedrosian, *The Turco-Mongol Invasions* 1979.



MAP 1.1 The Byzantine Empire in ca. 1025

The period from the ninth to the tenth century marked the height of Byzantine power. The army had far greater means at its disposal than the small Caucasian political powers. For Byzantium these nuclei constituted an indispensable embankment against the Arab world and the gateway to trade in the East. This role was inversely proportional to the decline of the Khazar Empire.¹⁴ The division between the Caucasian powers favored the action of the Byzantine Empire, which obtained part of the Bagratid domains of Iberia. In 1008, the Kingdom of Georgia was born with the union of Abkhazia and Iberia. In 1021 and 1022, two wars broke out between Byzantium and the recently born Caucasian kingdom for the rights to the Duchy of the High Tao (Tayk'). In both cases, the Byzantines prevailed, and Georgia became even weaker than before.¹⁵ Later Byzantium gained the Artsruni principality of Vaspurakan.

14 The Khazar Empire was determinant, as it constituted a hindrance on the Caucasian line for the Arabs, at least for the entire eighth century. In 730, in Ardabil, the Khazars inflicted a harsh defeat to the Arabs and pushed as far as Damascus, then the capital of the Caliphate. There is a general agreement among the scholars on the role played by the Khazars both for maintaining a political unity in the Volga region, and for protecting the Byzantine Empire. See Golden, *Khazar Studies*, 7–57; Koestler, *The Thirteenth Tribe*, 17–21. The Russian archaeologist Artamonov wrote: “It was only thanks to the vigorous Khazar attacks, which recalled the bulk of the Arab armies towards the Caucasus, that Byzantium could resist” (Artamonov, *Istoriia Khazar*, 19). Dmitrij Obolensky had the same opinion when stated that “the principal contribution of the Khazars to the world history was the successful defense of the Caucasian border from the furious attacks that the Arabs brought to the North”, (Obolensky, *The Byzantine Commonwealth*, 172). Nowadays opinions are more nuanced on this, but the general picture is still valid. See Wasserstein, “The Khazars and the World of Islam,” 374–75.

15 Toumanoff, “Caucasia and Byzantium,” 126–127.

The same fate fell to the Bagratid kingdom of Armenia, where John Smbat III (d. 1041) had to yield to the Byzantine authority. John was assigned lands in Cappadocia, just like the Artsruni Prince, who had been shortly before deprived of Vaspurakan.

Since the beginning of the 11th century, peoples of Turkic origin had infiltrated the south and East of Caucasia via Azerbaijan. The first known attack was in 1016.¹⁶ On this occasion, Byzantium moved against Vaspurakan. The Artsruni prince requested Byzantine help in exchange for formal recognition of Roman authority. The Empire accepted the agreement but limited itself to occupying and annexing the principality (1021–1022). The Byzantine conduct in this case, is exemplary of their imperial policy in Caucasia until the second half of the 11th century. The strategy proved fatal not only for the Caucasian powers but also for the Empire itself.

In the middle of the 11th century, a massive exodus of Armenians fled to Cappadocia, Cilicia, and Georgia. One-fifth of the Georgian ruling class during the time of Queen Tamar (between the 12th and 13th centuries) was of Armenian origin. The migratory movement reached its peak during these years.¹⁷ If before the 6th century the Armenians were, for Byzantium, one of the ethnic minority groups enlisted in the army, from the 9th–10th centuries, they became quantitatively dominant. In past years, scholars have agreed to estimate the number of Armenians in the army during the “golden age” of Byzantine history (ninth–tenth century) by stating that they made up at least 25% of all the armed forces.¹⁸ This phenomenon was mainly a consequence of the massive migration we mentioned above, a result of a widely conscious policy. Since the reign of Justinian I, entire villages were forcibly transferred, borderlands annexed, and military conscription was strictly imposed.¹⁹

The migrations were often the result of a situation of permanent conflict in the territories of Western Armenia. The flows moved towards Lesser Armenia, northern Syria, and Cilicia.²⁰ The influx of Armenian elements profoundly influenced Byzantine social physiognomy. In this period, it was not difficult

16 Ibid., 128. Golden, “The Turkic peoples and Caucasia,” 51–53; Minorsky, *Studies in Caucasian History*, 110ff; Toumanoff, *Studies in Christian Caucasian History*; De Lastivert, 1973; Thomson, “The Crusaders through Armenian Eyes,” 71–82.

17 Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, 39–41; Grousset, *Histoire de l’Arménie*, 586–587; Charanis, “The Armenians,” 50–53; Toumanoff, “Caucasia and Byzantium,” p. 129.

18 Charanis, “The Armenians,” 16–21 and 32–34; Toumanoff, “Caucasia and Byzantium,” p. 131.

19 Treadgold, *A History of the Byzantine State*, 178–80.

20 Charanis, “The Armenians,” 13–14 and 19–21; Toumanoff, “Caucasia and Byzantium,” 132–33; Grousset, *Histoire de l’Arménie*, 522.

to enter the army; the military was an accessible gateway to Byzantine society and a privileged means to climb the social ladder. In later centuries, particularly from the seventh onwards, the ruling class at court had Armenian origins or was partly Armenianized.²¹ Many monasteries and Iberian institutions were established within the imperial borders (Iviron on Mount Athos, for example). Moreover, the Caucasian influence on Byzantine culture was keen.²²

During the period of the most significant territorial expansion in the Caucasus, the Byzantines often pursued a policy that had harmful consequences in the medium term. Emperor Constantine IX (r. 1042–1055) abolished the obligatory military service in Iberia and replaced it with higher taxation.²³ This initiative gave rise to a process that had immediate effects; the newly annexed Armenian and Georgian territories were not only undermined by the wars and their population hostile in all social strata to Byzantium, but it also left the borders defenseless. The kingdoms of Kars, Lori, and Syunik, the princedom of Sasun, and the Artsruni principality of Moxoene were the only ones left in Armenia with substantial autonomy and capable of organizing a defense from external attacks.²⁴ But not simply because the roads to Byzantium through Caucasia were not adequately manned and secured militarily; the Byzantine policy – carried on since the end of the eleventh century – had weakened the Armenian political unity. The emigration mentioned previously had moved broad strata of the population and many other people (nobles, landowners, military leaders) to peripheral areas. This phenomenon had generated a vigorous political and social fraying, making the army feeble and bending the economic capacities of the kingdom. When the first nomadic incursions occurred in Southern Caucasus, Armenia proved incapable of offering adequate resistance.²⁵

Turkic nomads accelerated a process that was already underway, increased and drove emigration to those areas that offered potential refuge and sustenance, which were the same regions where members of the Armenian

21 In Toumanoff, “Caucasia and Byzantium,” we may find (Appendix) the lists of the eminent characters steadily entered the Byzantine leading class. We may appreciate that the figures of Armenians, Iberians, Abkhazs etc. are very high, especially for the ninth and the tenth centuries.

22 Toumanoff, “Caucasia and Byzantium,” 137.

23 Ibid.; Grousset, *Histoire de l'Arménie*, 587–88.

24 Toumanoff, “Caucasia and Byzantium,” 129–30; Grousset, *Histoire de l'Arménie*, 607–08.

25 Golden, “The Turkic peoples and Caucasia,” 53–7; Minorsky, *Studies in Caucasian History*, 60–62. For the consequences on Greater Armenia see Bedrosian, *The Turco-Mongol Invasions*, 68–69.

aristocracy had been confined; therefore, causing a significant demographic decline within the kingdom. The same fate which befell Georgia.

From the years 1037/38 Greater Armenia, Asia Minor, and Georgia experienced Turkic nomadic raids. This phenomenon was not ephemeral. It began in the first half of the eleventh century and lasted for decades in a series of raids of varying magnitude; the raids hit the region roughly corresponding to present-day eastern Turkey, Armenia, and Azerbaijan. This flow, which would last for over four centuries, had decisive consequences on the political geography of the Caucasus. Firstly, it caused the crushing of Greater Armenia (in fact, the Turkic raids never subdued the Armenian territory in its entirety but destroyed its unity). This influx resulted from massive movements of people, perhaps one ethnic whole, divided into different groups:²⁶ the first could be considered the regular Seljuk army and the second made up mostly of Turkmen mercenaries who were hardly able to be controlled by military commanders and often responsible for extensive devastation, robbery and plunders.²⁷ In 1042, 15,000 Turkmen from the Urmayah area attacked the principality of Vaspurakan near the northeastern coast of Lake Van, destroying the Byzantine troops positioned there to defend it. Almost simultaneously, another Turkic group attacked the Ayrarat district.

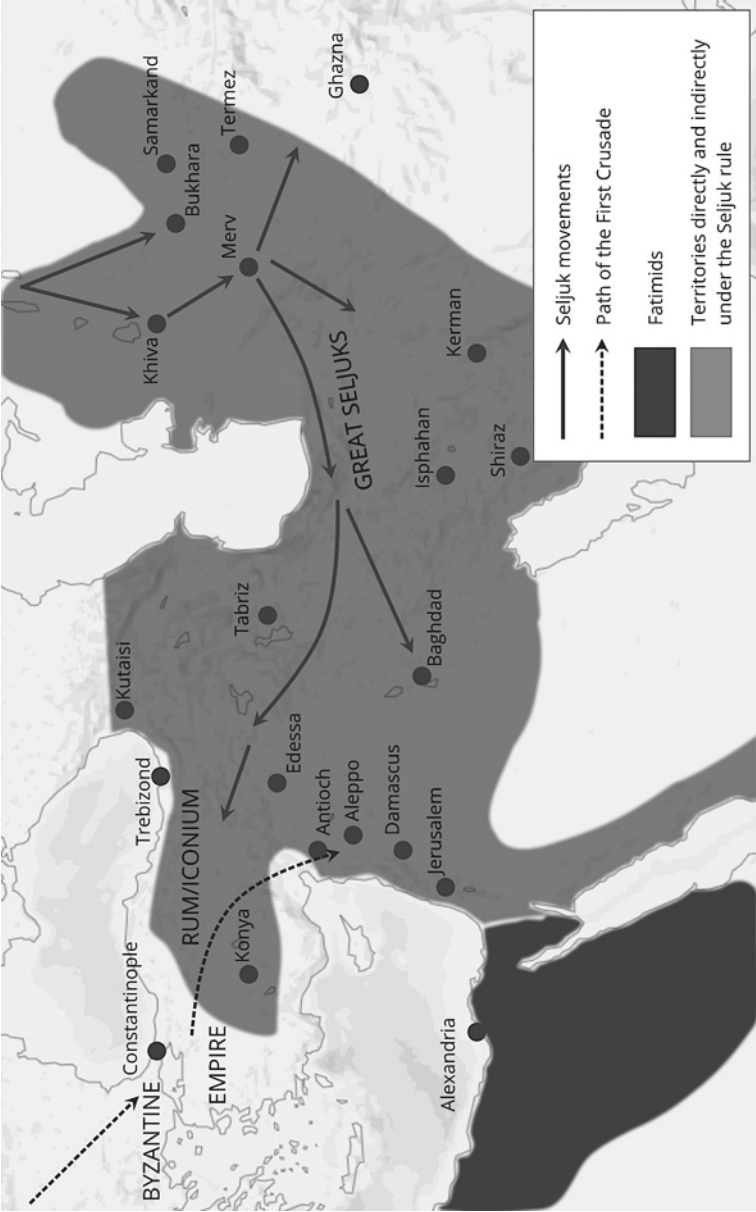
Between 1045 and 1063, mixed Turkic troops (composed of both Seljuk and other nomadic groups more or less directly controlled by the former) broke into Armenia and attacked both districts and cities, including Ani, Bayburt, Melitene (Malatya), Sivas, Kars, Caesarea.²⁸ In 1071 they defeated the Byzantine emperor Romanos IV Diogenes (1030–1072) in the battle of Manzikert.²⁹ The flip side was, amongst other things, the natural consequence of Byzantine politics in the Caucasus; of an embankment that no longer existed. The Battle of Manzikert decisively determined the political, economic, and cultural balance of the Caucasus, yet this was only the beginning of a process that would have far-reaching consequences in the region.

26 Cahen, *Pre-Ottoman Turkey*, 27–32; Bedrosian, *The Turco-Mongol Invasions*, 69.

27 Bedrosian, *The Turco-Mongol Invasions*, 70; Vyros, *The Decline of Medieval Hellenism*, 155–165.

28 Bedrosian, *The turco-Mongol Invasions*, 65. On the groups that attacked Vaspurakan specialists do not agree. For a picture of the debate see Golden, *The Turkic peoples and Caucasasia*, 54, n. 27.

29 Nicolle, “Manzikert 1071” and Cheynet, “Manzikert,” 410–38.



MAP 1.2 The Oghuz and Seljuk raids in eleventh-century Asia Minor

2 The Causes of the Crisis

Until the second half of the 12th century, the Byzantine Empire was the epicenter of a territory that had succeeded in maintaining in a sort of political and administrative unity. The Empire represented a political landmark for the entire region, from the Balkans to Anatolia and for the people who lived there, whether they were subjugated or even hostile.

The entire Pontus basin remained economically indispensable for Byzantium. The northern coast of the Black Sea, Crimea, and the Azov basin, in particular, were trade ports connected with the hinterland and the major trade routes to the north, leading to Kievan Rus' and the Baltic region (especially the salt road or the Variangian road).³⁰ Crimea itself, in its flat areas, was a precious granary. The well-known treaty signed between Manuel Komnenos and Genoa in 1169, the fruit of protracted negotiations and repeated ambassadorships, accorded the Ligurian city permission to trade in the provinces of the Empire, except for "Rosia and Matracha".³¹ The exception written in the agreement shows how important it was for the Empire to keep the Black Sea a closed space. A treaty signed in 1192 between Isaac Angelos and Genoa contains the same clause. The situation was similar in Venice. Both in the well-known chrysobull of 1082 and the one signed in 1198 with Alexios Angelos (d. 1211), the Serenissima could not access the Pontus.³² Despite many attempts, scholars have not found Italian merchants beyond the Bosphorus before the Fourth Crusade. Indeed, this initiative by Italian merchants was not long in coming. Already in May 1206, Zaccaria Stagnario and Pietro di Ferraguto signed a limited partnership contract in Constantinople, whereby the former granted the latter a considerable sum of money (100 golden perpers) to go to the "Greater Sea" and trade on the ship of Giorgio Barbaro, from Ancona, "until Sudak" (Soldaia for the Westerners),³³ then in Crimea. In July 1212 Angelo Abriano,

30 For the general picture, exhaustive and precise on the Byzantine economy in these years, see Maniatis, "The domain of private guilds," 339–369 and also Laiou, *The Economic History of Byzantium*.

31 The document belongs to the chrysobull of Isaac II Angelos of 1192, and was published in *Acta* by Miklosich and Müller (*Acta et diplomata graeca medii aevi sacra et profana*, 6 voll. Vienna 1860–1890, vol. III, p. 35, l. 30–34) e da Dölger (*Regesten der Kaiserurkunden des Oströmischen Reiches*, 5 voll., München 1924–1965, n. 1488). On the interpretations of this passage opinions diverge. See Balard, *La Romanie génoise*, 28, n. 44; Bratianu, *La Mer Noire*, 175; Sokolov, "A proposito del significato," 89–97. See also the old, but still very informative, Heyd, *Storia del commercio del Levante*, 223ff.

32 Tafel-Thomas, *Urkunden*, 43–54 and 246–77.

33 «Usque in Soldadea»: Bratianu, *La Mer Noire*, 183; Morozzo della Rocca and Lombardo, *Documenti del commercio veneziano*, II, 18–20.

who defined himself as “habitor in Constantinople”, asked Giovanni Bianco di Cannaregio for the money from a deposit they had stipulated in April of the same year to give it to Zaccaria Stagnario (probably a professional merchant, since he seemed to be the same person from the document of 1206) who would trade in Smisso. Zaccaria would reach Smisso on Giovanni Longobardo’s ship *de Provençalibus*.³⁴

It is not possible to determine with precision when Crimea and the Azov, the Byzantine Gothia, fell from the hands of the Empire and ended up under Latin authority. In his ancient and still in some ways unsurpassed history of Levantine trade, William Heyd claimed that this passage would take place immediately after and because of the 1204 crusade.³⁵ In fact, in the *Partitio Romaniae*,³⁶ Crimea does not appear, nor does the document mention the Eastern part of Anatolia, which seems to show that those possessions were no longer pertinent to the Empire.

The Fourth Crusade – between 1203 and 1204 – had a devastating impact on the political balance of the entire Black Sea coast. The consequences of the Latin conquest of Constantinople and the atrocities that followed imprinted onto the souls of contemporaries and determined a profound fracture between two communities that until then had lived the schism of 1054 as a merely doctrinal fact. The Latins were, despite the religious division, perceived as part of the Christian *ecumene*. But from 1204 onward for the Byzantines, this perspective would change significantly. The Western Christians became external to the ideological frontier beyond which was the barbarian, alien, and adverse world.

On the other hand, the Crusade against Christians also had substantial economic consequences. Byzantium’s frequent relations with the surrounding world, the Rus’ principalities, Georgia, and Crimea, were to change decisively. Moreover, the western commercial powers, in particular the Italian maritime cities, started a progressive and inexorable penetration that led them to establish commercial emporia on the whole coast of the Black Sea and to form their own, even if it was limited in scope, sovereignty in the strategic points of Pontus.

But how did the crusade intervene in changing these balances? The death of Manuel Komnenos (in 1180), the Emperor who had curbed the Western

34 Morozzo della Rocca and Lombardo, *Documenti del commercio veneziano*, II, 84–85. The name of the ship seems to suggest intense traffic on the Black Sea only a few years after the Crusade. Unfortunately, we do not know other documents from these years about merchants on the Black Sea to appreciate the volume of commerce.

35 Heyd, *Storia del commercio*, 777. On this, the argument of M. Balard is more than convincing (*La Romanie génoise*, 28).

36 Carile, “Partitio terrarum Imperii Romaniae,” 125–305.

ambitions of conquest,³⁷ marked the beginning of Byzantine decadence. Manuel I's death did not generate the first process of disintegration within the imperial territory because it had already occurred many times in the past. However, this time "new and ruinous were the immediate political implications" because nobody before had ever questioned "the unity and sense of *basileia*".³⁸ A new concept of the emperor was emerging, so he no longer represented the eschatological imperialism that had characterized the Empire since its foundation. In reality, the Byzantine throne had never been very firm. The emperors succeeded one another almost twice as quickly as the German Western Empire.³⁹ However, the Komnenos granted a sort of monarchical consolidation that, although ephemeral, gave greater security to the state than it had in the past. Three emperors reigned for almost a century. The death of Manuel, the third said emperor, sent the Byzantine monarchy into instability and violent succession.

Furthermore, we must consider the difficult economic conditions for the people. The growing threats represented by Western – mainly German – conquests' had pushed the treasury to strengthen expenses for defense, which, like the others, weighed directly on people's pockets. Moreover, Latin merchants were becoming more and more intrusive in the Empire's capital in these years. As we have seen, some of them had quarters in Constantinople, and this would only be the beginning of a much more extensive commercial domination.

The traumatic event of the Fourth Crusade was part of the generalized weakness of the Empire, which could not, in this period, cope with a threat of this magnitude. It is not this book's task to investigate the events of 1203–4 in detail, but a general framework helps determine the outcomes of the Crusade in Caucasia.

The Fourth Crusade was a very articulated initiative.⁴⁰ It is well known that the original plan of the crusade leaders was not to attack Constantinople,

37 In those years there was a lively debate among the Western aristocracy on the need to promote a crusade against Saladin, who had occupied the Holy Sepulcher after the hard battle in Palestine (July 1187) in which the Latin army was defeated and Jerusalem fell on 2 October. Two years later the kings decided to act: The Redbeard, Philip II Augustus of France and Richard of England took the cross.

38 Gallina, *Potere e società a Bisanzio*, 313–14. See also Angold, *The Byzantine Empire*, 295–315; Treadgold, *A History*, 677–83; and especially the beautiful book of P. Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I*, chap. 6, 413ff.

39 From the mid-ninth century and until the late eleventh, 23 emperors succeeded to the Byzantine throne. In this respect, see Kazhdan, *Vizantijskaja kul'tura*, 27–66.

40 It was a diverted expedition. Scholarship on the Crusade is huge. See Queller and Madden, *The Fourth Crusade*; Angold, *The Fourth Crusade*; Ortalli, Ravegnani and Schreiner, *Quarta crociata*. Among the general works on the topic see Gallina, *Potere e società*, 318;

with the exception of the Venetians. The Serenissima, from the beginning, had interests to break the Byzantine resistance from its commercial penetration beyond the Bosphorus, especially as Genoa had established good relations with Alexios III Angelos,⁴¹ and was receiving substantial economic privileges from the Empire. In fact, Venice gave its full backing to the crusade, and on 13 April 1204, the Latin army raided the Byzantine capital, resulting in extreme violence and atrocities. The massacre of Constantinople was the practical consummation of the 11th-century schism.

The political consequences of the crusade were extraordinarily beneficial for Venice, which gained a vast portion – 3/8 – of the Empire. All the Crusaders received significant territorial benefits, but those afforded to the *Serenissima* far exceeded those of anyone else. Baldwin I of Flanders obtained a quarter of the imperial territory, and the other three quarters plus another half was for Venice. The rest was divided among the knights who had taken part in the crusade. For the first time in history, foreign forces shattered the Empire. The Fourth Crusade gave birth to the Latin Empire of Constantinople. Venice took possession of the entire route from the motherland to the Byzantine capital, controlled the straits, and even the gateway into the city. The Franks reorganized the Empire by crushing its unity into many principalities. All of this resulted in extraordinary political, economic, and cultural consequences for the Eastern Black Sea basin as well as for the region north towards the Azov.

The political, cultural, and economic evolution of the Byzantine Empire had a direct impact on Caucasian history. The Greek influence on the formation of the Slavic world and Caucasia in particular is indisputable.⁴² The Southern Slavic populations (Serbs, Croats, and Bulgarians), at least from when we can trace them in the sources, had coexisting relations with Byzantium on the political, cultural, and economic level. Less continuous and more indirect, but equally important, were the relations between Byzantium and Rus' and the non-Slavic peoples of the eastern area (Turkmen, Khazars, Polovcians/Cumans).⁴³ The situation in the Near East on the verge of the Fourth Crusade

Ostrogorsky wrote about a 'diversion of the Crusade': Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State*, 415. Other titles on the Fourth Crusade are in the bibliographical apparatus.

41 Alexios was related on his mother's side to the imperial family of the Komnenoi. Angold, *The Fourth Crusade*, 39–40. See also Garland, *Byzantine Empresses*, 210ff.

42 Duičev, "Bisanzio e il mondo slavo," 4; Duičev, "Les Slaves et Byzance," 31–77; Diehl, *Byzance, grandeur et décadence*, 292ff.

43 For a general picture of the Slavic-Byzantine relations in pre-Mongol period, Vernadsky, "Relations bizantino-russes," 269–76 is still a valuable reference; see also Priselkov, "Russko-Vizantijskie otnosheniya," 103; Obolensky, "Svjazi mezhdru Vizantiej i Rus'ju," 5ff. For a further contribution on the topic, see Pritsak, *Origin of Rus'*, and Sverdlov,

was extraordinarily complex and formed the context within which this event generated a jolt capable of partially changing the political order of the Pontic region.

As we have seen above, in the *Partitio Romaniae* – drafted right after the Crusade – there is no mention of the Caucasus.⁴⁴ The political situation in the region differed from those of the Anatolian and Northern Black Sea coast regions. The First Crusade had already played a decisive role in the political equilibrium of the Caucasus. The Crusaders never arrived there, but they sharply weakened Islamic power. This event dealt a very severe blow to the Seljuks and created a temporary dislocation in the meshes of Turkic power. In the twelfth century alone, while the Komnenos restoration was underway in Byzantium, the Georgian Kingdom experienced a period of sturdy territorial and political expansion. On the eve of the coronation of Tamar the Great (1184), the kingdom of Georgia was mainly the product of the crusades.⁴⁵ The Bagratids took advantage of Seljuk weakness and pursued a very aggressive policy, eventually repelling the assaults of the Sultanate of Rum.

In this context, the Kingdom of Georgia, with renewed military and cultural strength, began to emerge vigorously. The King of Abkhazia and Georgia, David IV (r. 1089–1125),⁴⁶ could penetrate this divide and managed to defeat the Islamic forces repeatedly. He reclaimed certain territories that had fallen into Seljuk hands during the raids of the eleventh century. In 1122, after four centuries, David reconquered Tbilisi⁴⁷ and occupied the area of Shirvan. In 1123 he conquered Ani (which was both lost and recovered several times in the following years)⁴⁸ and then marched into Greater Armenia, regaining lost and ancient possessions. During these years, many Armenians fought in the ranks

Domongol'skaja Rus. An exhaustive bibliography is in Laiou, *The Economic History of Byzantium*, in particular part IV, *Exchange, Trade, and Markets*.

44 Also in Bratianu, *La Mer Noire*, 178.

45 Allen, *A History of the Georgian People*, 96; Vasiliev, “The foundation of Trebizond,” 13.

46 The succession of Georgian kings is problematic and depends on the political “weight” scholars lend to David’s predecessors. If we consider all the kings of Iberia as Georgian kings, since David I (d. 881) and included the Kuropalates David III (d. ca. 1000) king of Tao, then David *The Builder* can correctly be considered the IV.

47 Narrating the Georgian conquest of Tblisi, Ibn al-Athir provides a very positive portrait of David. According to the Persian historian, he “undertook to please the inhabitants of the city” by “granting him a series of privileges including a ban on killing pigs, maintaining the sacredness of Friday prayers, separation in public baths between Georgians and Muslims”; in practice David “showed more consideration for Muslims than the Muslim kings themselves” (Ibn al-Athir, 486).

48 The city fell again under the control of George III in August 1161 when, at his command, the Georgians “marched to the city of Ani, in the Arran. They made themselves masters, and killed many people.” (Ibn al-Athir, 499), but it was not the final conquest.

of the Georgian army.⁴⁹ Foreign policy was not the only concern of David's reign. His energy was also absorbed by internal strife. The court aristocracy had consolidated much of its power and represented an obstacle to the sovereign's plan for a centralized monarchy. To strengthen his military force, David called (1118) the Qipchaqs⁵⁰ to begin settling the lands around the Georgian kingdom; they could effectively repopulate the countryside, which had suffered a significant demographic drop as a result of the Seljuk raids.⁵¹ The creation of an army composed only by Cumans⁵² represented a risk for the rural population with whom coexistence was difficult. It was, in fact, a salaried army that received good grazing land for services rendered.⁵³

After several stagnant years and following King David's death,⁵⁴ George III (r. 1156–1184) ascended the throne. The new king, in the wake of his predecessor, resumed the campaigns against the Seljuks. He led the northern Armenian campaigns and conquered Gandzak, Dvin, Kars, and Ani. All these cities became Georgian for good in 1199.⁵⁵ In 1178, George III nominated his daughter Tamar as co-regent. When George died in 1184, Tamar (r. 1184–1213) was crowned “king” of Georgia. The sources agree in describing her as a brilliant woman and politically savvy.⁵⁶ Her reign was the apogee for the Christian kingdom of Georgia, which subjugated Azerbaijan as well. For a long time, Iranian peoples inhabited the region corresponding roughly to present-day Azerbaijan until it came into the sphere of Turkic nomads. The Oghuz first (twelfth century) and then briefly under the Khorazm-shah Jalal-ud-Din – fleeing from the Mongols – who profoundly influenced its language and culture.⁵⁷

49 Allen, *A History of the Georgian People*, 85–108.

50 On which see the next chapter.

51 See on this Kovács, “Dynastic Relations,” 200–211.

52 5,000 men, according to the studies of P. Golden (“Cumanica I,” 61).

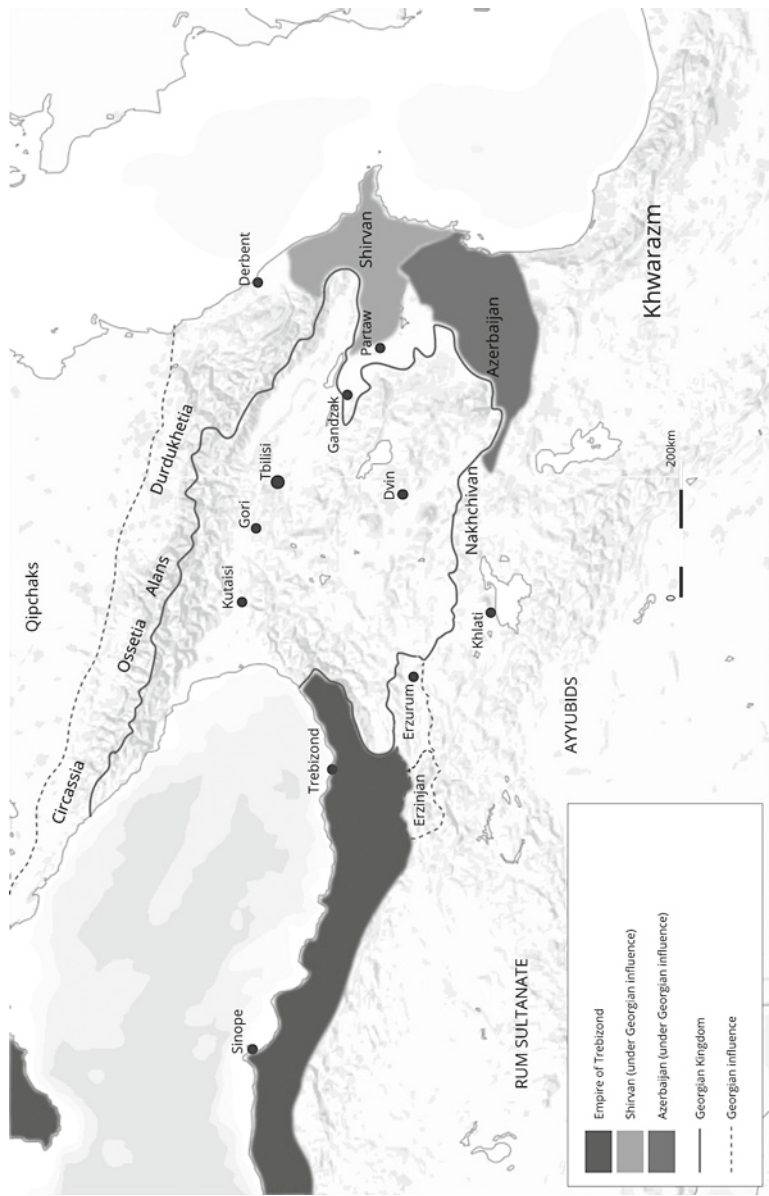
53 Circa 200,000 individuals from the steppes came to Georgia on this occasion, not only because of the interest that the nomads had in good pastures, but also because at the beginning of the twelfth century the Russians launched a massive offensive against the Cumans; it culminated in the advance of 1107/1109 on the settlements of Sugrov, Šarukan and Balin. See on this and the figures Golden, “Cumanica I,” 70–71; Pritsak, “The Polovcians and Rus,” 335 and 368.

54 According Ibn al-Athir (p. 488), David died on 1124.

55 For a good reconstruction of the events, see Dédéyan, Zekiyan and Arslan, *Storia degli Armeni*, 235–268.

56 Eastmond, *Royal Imagery*, 93–185. Dondua and Berznišvili, *Žizn' caricy caric Tamar*, 1985. Toumanoff, “On the Relationship,” 299–312. Although very old, it still informative the work of M.F. Brosset, *Histoire de la Géorgie*, already quoted, especially the vol. 1, pp. 403–480 in which, alongside the French translation of the Georgian chronicle.

57 See below, chapter five. The Georgian conquest took place between 1202 and 1203 when the Georgians took over Dvin who, “like all the rest of Azerbaijan, belongs to Emir



MAP 1.3 The Caucasus after the Fourth Crusade

Georgia then pursued a prudent and organized policy by gaining new territories and cementing alliances with Byzantium through marriage. The political balance between the Empire and the Caucasian kingdom had changed. They were the only two Christian powers in the Middle East and, as a result, were in frequent contact with one another, mainly during periods when the Turkic threat intensified. Between 1028 and 1034, during the regency of Romanos III Argyros (d. 1034), Queen Miriam of Iberia visited the Greek capital, and in 1032 her son and the emperor's niece, Helena got married.⁵⁸ Between 1065 and 1071, the marriage took place between Martha, daughter of Bagrat IV of Georgia (ca1027–1072), and Michael VII Dukas.⁵⁹ During the reign of Alexios I (1081–1118), Kata, one of the daughters of David II, married the emperor's nephew.⁶⁰

The Third Crusade was no less important for the trajectory of political events in the region. In 1190, during the expedition led by the German Emperor Frederick I (Barbarossa, 1122–1190), the crusaders broke into Anatolia. The Seljuk control over the territory was already weakened and continued to erode due to the fratricidal struggles that frequently took place at the court of Sultan Kilij Arslan, whose two sons did not want to cede power to each other. The Georgian army took advantage of Seljuk frailty by leading military campaigns in the area between the central-eastern Black Sea and the southwestern Caspian coasts.⁶¹ As a result, Frederick I and Kilij Arslan signed an agreement, followed by pledges by both parties to fight together against a potential alliance between Byzantium and the Ayyubid Sultan of Egypt Salah-ad-Din (Saladin, 1137–1193). On this occasion, the Sultan of Rum granted the Crusader army a safe passage through Asia Minor, but the initiative proved useless because the German Emperor died in the spring of 1190 in the waters of the Orontes, in Cilicia.

For the Byzantine Empire, the situation became, if possible, even more critical. Tensions with the Sultan of Rum aggravated the hindrances in the Balkans. Taking advantage of the imperial commitment against Barbarossa,

Abu-Bakr [...]" (Ibn al-Athir cit., p. 501). Athir attributes to the Emir not exactly uplifting qualities: "he was always busy drinking night and day, non-stop, and never ceased to be immersed in drunkenness" (ibid.). According to the Persian historian, when the inhabitants of Dvin went to ask him for help, he did not grant it, thus making him co-responsible for the taking of the city by the Georgian side and the consequent massacre that the population had to suffer. On the conquest of Azerbaijan see Ibn al-Athir cit., pp. 501–509.

58 Brosset, *Histoire*, 314; Allen, *A History of the Georgian People* 88–89; Vasiliev, "The foundation," 4.

59 Brosset, *Histoire*, 330; Allen, *A History of the Georgian People*, 91.

60 Brosset, *Histoire*, 360; Allen, *A History of the Georgian People*, 99; Vasiliev, "The foundation," 4.

61 Vasiliev, "The Foundation," 13; Allen, *A History of the Georgian People*, 106.

Bulgarians and Serbs had expanded to Sofia and Skopje. 1190 was an *annus horribilis* for Byzantium. The Bulgarians inflicted a severe defeat on the imperial troops in the Balkans. In 1194 the same result occurred in Arcadiopolis, where the army of Isaac II Angelos (d. 1204) suffered another setback. In April 1195, the Emperor's brother-in-law, Alexios, violently seized the throne. It was the coup de grace.⁶²

Meanwhile, in Anatolia, the withdrawal of the Crusaders was followed by Rum's aggressive strategy. In particular, it was Suleyman II (d. 1204), the son of the Sultan of Iconium Kilij Arslan II (r. 1156–1192), who in 1196 recovered the capital of the Sultanate and imposed harsh conditions on the new Emperor Alexios III Angelos (r. 1195–1203). The Byzantine sovereign had to pay a high tribute to the Seljuks, but in the same year, the Qipchaq-Georgian army crushed Suleyman. At the time, the Sultan attacked Armenia, ruled by king Leo II, who had violated the borders of the Turkic Sultanate. But the Georgian army had already penetrated the frontiers and advanced to Erzurum. On this occasion, Suleyman subdued Salturid and continued to Georgia. It was then that the Turkic army suffered a significant defeat that proved decisive for the future of the Caucasus and especially for the Georgian kingdom. The Georgian chronicle recounts the events in detail. The sultan

Camouflaged his treachery in friendly forms, he often sent ambassadors to ask for peace, and provided many beautiful gifts. But soon he gathered eighty thousands of men, 800,000 soldiers, and the Sultan's army crossed all his domains: Mesopotamia, the Calonero, Galatea, Ancouria, Isauro, Cappadocia, Great Armenia, Bithynia, the borders of Paphlagonia and forced everyone to take up arms, leaving only the women behind to tend to the villages.⁶³

In 1199, at the beginning of the war against the Seljuks,

The Georgians went into battle. General Zakaria Mkhargrdzel, Chalwa, and Iwane of Akhal-Tzikhé and the other Thorians took the vanguard; on one side, they placed the Abkhazs, on the other the Imereti, and further on the Kartli, those of Cakheti and Hereth.⁶⁴

The war ultimately proved victorious. It is interesting to observe how the chronicler defines the enemies as barbarians. This denomination emerges every time

62 On these events see Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I*, 193–95 and 204–05.

63 Brosset, *Histoire* 457–58.

64 Ibid., 460.

the two sides opposed one another. The perception of the other as barbarian because they were not Christians underlines the emphasis Georgians put on religious identity.⁶⁵ This awareness is one reason for Georgia's substantial cultural influence on the Caucasian region in the early thirteenth century: a predominance that would soon undergo a severe blow.

The Georgian victory over the Seljuks dictated the pace of the events following the Fourth Crusade, whose outcome reverberated in the area even if the conquest of Constantinople by the Latins had a more substantial impact on Anatolia, the Aegean Islands, and the Balkans. Fundamentally, therefore, in those areas surrounding the capital of the Empire, the impact of the Crusade on the Caucasus was less direct but no less significant. In 1204, Suleyman died during his second expedition against Georgia and after the conquest of Ankara. His brother Kay Khusraw I (d. 1196) succeeded him. He regained the throne that Suleyman himself had taken from him and adopted very different policies from his brother. He was much less aggressive and tended to have less interest in expansionism. Plans for further invasion into Georgia were therefore abandoned.

3 The Consequences of the Crusade: The Empire of Trebizond

The jolt caused by the taking of Constantinople favored the birth of new centers of power more or less directly connected to the tragic event. The Latin Empire of Constantinople – fragmented since its birth – and the stable Venetian ‘colonial’ system,⁶⁶ joined the three new states originating from the Crusade. All

65 The Georgian Chronicle provides many examples. Brosset, *Histoire*, 462: “It was a marvelous spectacle to watch these barbarians run [...]”; Ibid., 466: “this brilliant Queen among all those who have brought the scepter, always occupied in the service of God, to the construction and embellishment of Churches and monasteries”; Ibid., 467, when David Soslan died in 1208, the chronicler writes: “he was a prince full of all the religious virtues”. On the contrary, it is interesting to notice the list of names used by the Persian sources to describe the Georgians. For example, Ibn al-Athir, 509–12; and the Ilkhanid functionary and historian ‘Ala’ud-Din Ata-Malik Juvaini (1226–1283), who wrote *The History of the World Conqueror* (Trans. by John Andrew Boyle. 2 vols. Manchester, 1959. Repr. 1997. From now on, Juvaini) in the thirteenth century. Juvaini began writing the *History* in 1252–53 in Karakorum, in the same years when the Franciscan William of Rubruck was visiting the Mongol capital. There is also an excellent Italian edition of Juvaini’s *History*, edited, and translated by G. Scarcia (Milano 1962, repr. 1991), 490–93.

66 The term “colonization” is not proper because for Venice, and even more so for Genoa half a century later, the characteristics of this domination were not those of colonization. The areas in which the merchants of the Italian cities settled were not entirely occupied and even when this happened (the case of the island of Chios is the only one with such a character). There was no territorial domination and no exploitation of local resources.

were well distributed on the southern coast of the Black Sea. The principality of Epirus, which became the Empire of Thessalonica in 1224, soon disappeared following the harsh defeat inflicted on it by John (Ivan) Asen II (r. 1218–1241) in 1230 at Klokotnitsa.⁶⁷ The Empire of Nicaea, which would prove to be the heir to the imperial tradition, was geographically close to the capital and housed the new patriarch, but it was the Empire of Trebizond which played a prominent role in the politics of the Caucasian region. Geographically distant from the capital, the Empire could never recuperate it, but it was decisive for the political balance in the area because of its relations with neighboring powers, primarily Georgia. It was also economically fundamental because it became a frequented international trade hub and had a profound cultural influence on the region because of the significance of the house that had founded it, the Komnenos.⁶⁸

The dynasty of Queen Tamar, the Bagratids, was related to the Byzantine crown since the late eleventh century with the Dukas and Komnenos. Andronikos, in 1170, found shelter with George III, who had welcomed him graciously. According to the words of the Georgian Chronicles: “one-day Andronikos Komnenos, a cousin of Manuel the Great’s father, sovereign of the entire West and Emperor of Greece, came [to George III]; he was with his wife [...]. George gave the prince a welcome worthy of his high family, gave him all the cities and citadels he needed, and also a residence near his own”.⁶⁹ According to this passage, Andronikos likely had blood ties with the ruling house of Georgia.⁷⁰ Andronikos’ Georgian experience could be the basis for

It was an economic and financial occupation. We can therefore speak of colonies with a simplification, but it would be more correct to use the term *emporion*, *outposts* etc. On this point Michel Balard’s preface to the new edition of *The Genoese Colonies* by Robert Lopez is very instructive (Lopez, *Storia delle colonie genovesi*).

67 Curta, *Eastern Europe in the Middle Ages*, 690; Dall’Aglio, “The Second Bulgarian Kingdom,” 109–117.

68 Scholarship on the Empire of Trebizond is vast. For further readings see Shukurov, “Trebizond and the Seljuks,” 73–138; Udalcova, Nasledova, Fonkič and Bank, *XV Mezhdunarodnyi congress*, 17–45; Uspenskij, “Vydelenie Trapezunta,” 21–34; Karpov, *Empire of Great Comnenoi*, 153–59; Karpov, *L’impero di Trebisonda*; old, but still informative (and pleasant) is the essay of N. Jorga (*Une nouvelle théorie*); Kuršanskis, “L’Empire de Trébizonde,” 237–56. See also Shukurov, “The Oriental margins” and Eastmond, *Art and identity*.

69 Brosset, *Histoire* 396–397; Vasiliev, “The foundation,” 6; the same passage is in Uspenskij, *Vydelenie Trapezunta*.

70 That is in Vasiliev, “The foundation,” 6–8. Andronikos was the grandfather of the first Emperor of Trebizond. Vasiliev correctly noted that the name “David” is reported only from now in the imperial family; earlier, David was an unknown name in Byzantium. The Georgian Chronicle expressly shows the relation among the two. After that the Georgian

the substantial widespread acceptance of the Komnenos government in the Anatolian city.

The anti-Komnenos revolt that broke out in Byzantium in 1185 forced Manuel's sons, Alexios and David, to flee the anger of Isaac Angelos. The children took refuge at Tamar's court and grew up in a culturally lively environment where they learned the Georgian language. These events influenced the choice of Trebizond as a center to kick off the reconstruction after the defeat of 1204. However, these dates suggest that the foundation of the new state was not a direct consequence of the second conquest of Constantinople. The crusaders sacked the Byzantine capital for the first time on 18 July 1203. In April of the following year, Alexios Komnenos entered Trebizond; on 13 April, Constantinople fell for the second time.

Furthermore, according to the Georgian chronicle,⁷¹ at the beginning of 1203, Tamar welcomed an unspecified number of monks to court. Some came from Mount Athos, a few from Cyprus, while others came from Antioch. As was customary, the Queen discharged them with lavish donations for their religious order, and on the way back, some of them stopped in Constantinople. Having realized that, Alexios III Angelos – hostile to the Georgian kingdom – confiscated the goods they were carrying. Tamar sent new donations, but the Queen took it a step further.

She reacted to the Byzantine abuse by invading Trebizond.⁷² The narrated event would ultimately serve as a pretext. Indeed, it is more likely that the Georgian Queen planned the conquest of Trebizond to expand her influence over Asia Minor and get a bridgehead for trade in the Black Sea basin. Tamar's expansionist policy had characterized her reign from the beginning. Not only did the Queen strengthen the Georgian supremacy over the entire Caucasus, but she also recovered many districts and towns from the Seljuks. The victory of Ani in 1209⁷³ is indicative of this. According to the Georgian chronicle,

army had occupied "the whole Paphlagonia and the Pontus, [Queen Tamar] donated [both] to Alexios Komnenos, son of Andronikos, who was then sheltered by the Queen", Brosset, *Histoire*, 465.

71 Ibid., 464–65; Vasiliev, "The foundation", 18–19.

72 "The Queen was informed of it, and to confound the demon (apparently Isaac) sent to those saints even more money", Brosset, *Histoire*, 465.

73 The city fell after that "12 thousand men, not counting those who died on the spot, were massacred, like those in the churches" (Brosset, *Histoire*, 468). Heard the news, the Georgian Queen ordered the retaliation. The troops, under the orders of the brilliant old Zechariah, took Ani back, "defeated the Saracens (Ibid., p. 469), and killed 12,000 people". Apart from the numbers, which look approximate and largely symbolic, the Georgian chronicler is often reliable and, in this period, there is no doubt about Tamar's military potential as well as the repeated Georgian victories over the Turks.

Tamar gave Alexios the military forces to carry out the expedition.⁷⁴ Georgian and Imereti troops also took part in the enterprise.⁷⁵ The invasion was not likely part of a more ambitious plan that would have foreseen the reconquest of Constantinople.

Trebizond, a Byzantine city, became the capital of a small empire, whose importance would remain vital for a long time for the surrounding region and Transcaucasia in particular. The historical and strategic importance of Trebizond could justify Georgian intentions to conquer the Anatolian city, which was a thriving center of commerce. With the new regency, Trebizond expanded, and its geographical position contributed to its development. Already in the eighth century, it was a key port for Georgia.⁷⁶ Merchants frequented it from far and wide and included: Greeks, Armenians, Circassians, Jews, and merchants from Crimea and Iberia.⁷⁷ The Persian and Central Asian routes had been active since the twelfth century.⁷⁸ And the Crusade of 1204 boosted its role as a commercial reference point in the region.

The Byzantine decadence began in the second half of the twelfth century and contrasted with – and perhaps was a partial consequence of – the growth of the peripheral cities.⁷⁹ Moreover, the Empire loosened the oppressive taxation on the peripheral cities, especially in the final years of the twelfth century. Finally, the Mongol conquest and the constitution of the Ilkhanate of Persia played a decisive role in the establishment of Trebizond. The birth of a unitary state determined above all enhanced security of transit routes, therefore more extensive mobility and an increase in commercial traffic. If the terrestrial routes benefited from this situation, the same occurred with maritime traffic. The sea united Trebizond with Constantinople, and there was frequent contact with the northern coast of the Black Sea, Crimea, and the Azov Sea. These trading relations intensified further when the Italian maritime cities settled on the coasts of the “Mare Maggiore” and took advantage of a new, comprehensive trading system. Genoa and Venice built their first establishment in Crimea, where Caffa (Theodosia) became an extraordinarily important commercial center.

74 Vasiliev, “The foundation,” cit., p. 23.

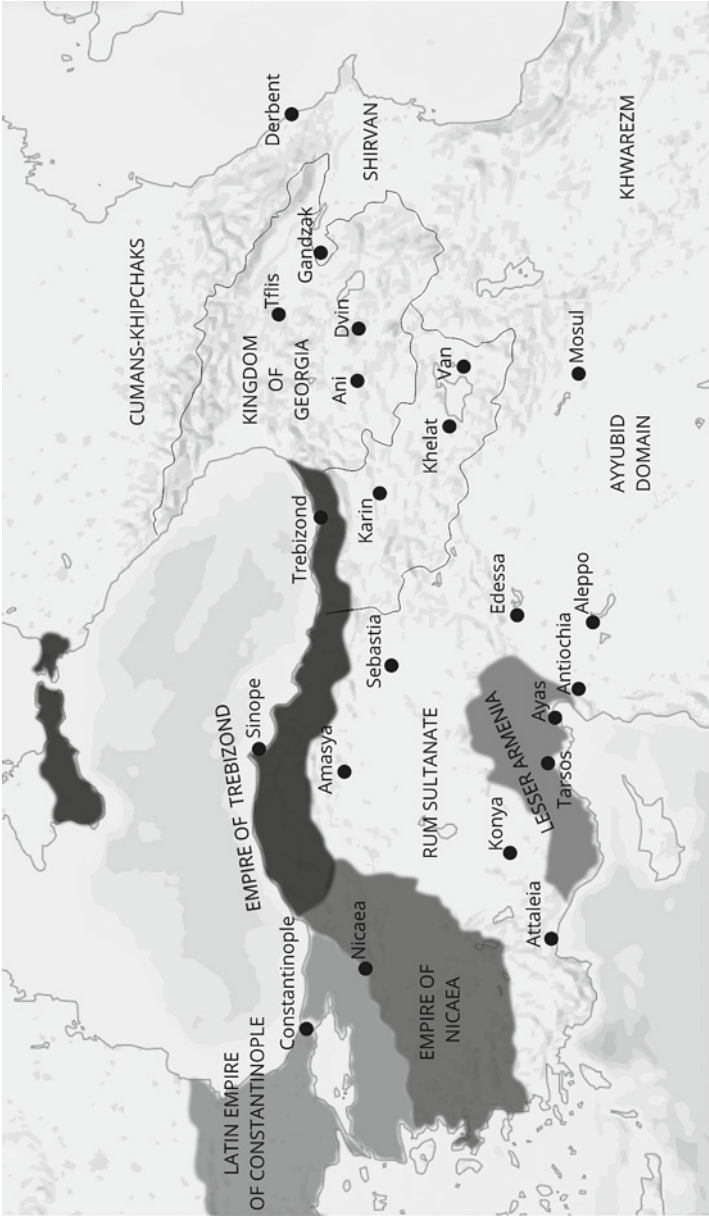
75 “[Tamar] sent out a detachment of Imeretian soldiers who took over Lazica, Trebizond, Limon, Samsun, Sinope, Cerasont [Giresun], Cythora, Amastris, Heraclea ...”; Brosset, *HG* cit., p. 465; Vasiliev, “The foundation,” 20.

76 Karpov, *L'impero di Trebisonda*, 35; A. Laiou, “Exchange and Trade,” 726–88.

77 Karpov, *L'impero di Trebisonda*, 29–30.

78 Ibid., 30.

79 Ibid., 31; Uspenskij, *Istoria Vizantijskoj imperii*, 658.



MAP 1.4 The Empire of Trebizond and its neighboring states in the aftermath of the Fourth Crusade

Nevertheless, Trebizond remained the intersection of all routes connecting the Caucasus to Asia Minor, the Holy Land and the port of Ayas, and the Persian city of Tabriz, gateway to the Far East. This economic prominence endured for an extensive period. According to M. Balard there is a strong probability that the installation of an organized Genoese community in Trebizond is more or less contemporary to that of Caffa, therefore shortly after the middle of the thirteenth century. In 1291 a member of the Doria family working for the Komnenos, and Galvano Negro was the Genoese consul in Trebizond.⁸⁰ It is also worth mentioning that slavery was one of the most lucrative businesses the Latins set up. At the end of the 13th century, their provenance once again shows how close the ties with cities such as Abkhazs, Laz, Circassians, Zichians, Cumans were with the Caucasus.

After Tamar's death in 1213,⁸¹ relations between the Trapezuntine Empire and Georgia changed. With the Queen's successor, George IV Lasha (r. 1213–1223), relations between the Christian kingdom and the young Anatolian Empire began to ebb. It was a transitory situation as events in the West forced the Empire of Trebizond to be more active in the Caucasus and Crimea.

Between the summer and fall of 1214, David Komnenos (d. 1212), Alexios' brother, was harshly defeated and killed by the Rums of Izz ad-Din; on that occasion, Alexios was taken prisoner. The Empire of Trebizond had to accept a protectorate from the Sultan of Iconium, to whom he paid a heavy tribute. At this date, the western borders of the Anatolian Empire reached the rivers Iris and Thermodon (Jeshil Yrmak and Terme), only 155 miles from the capital.⁸² The location of the Sultanate of Iconium in North-central Asia Minor, and its outlet on the same, literally cut Anatolia in two, leaving the Nicene Empire of Laskaris to the West and the Komnenos of Trebizond to the east.⁸³

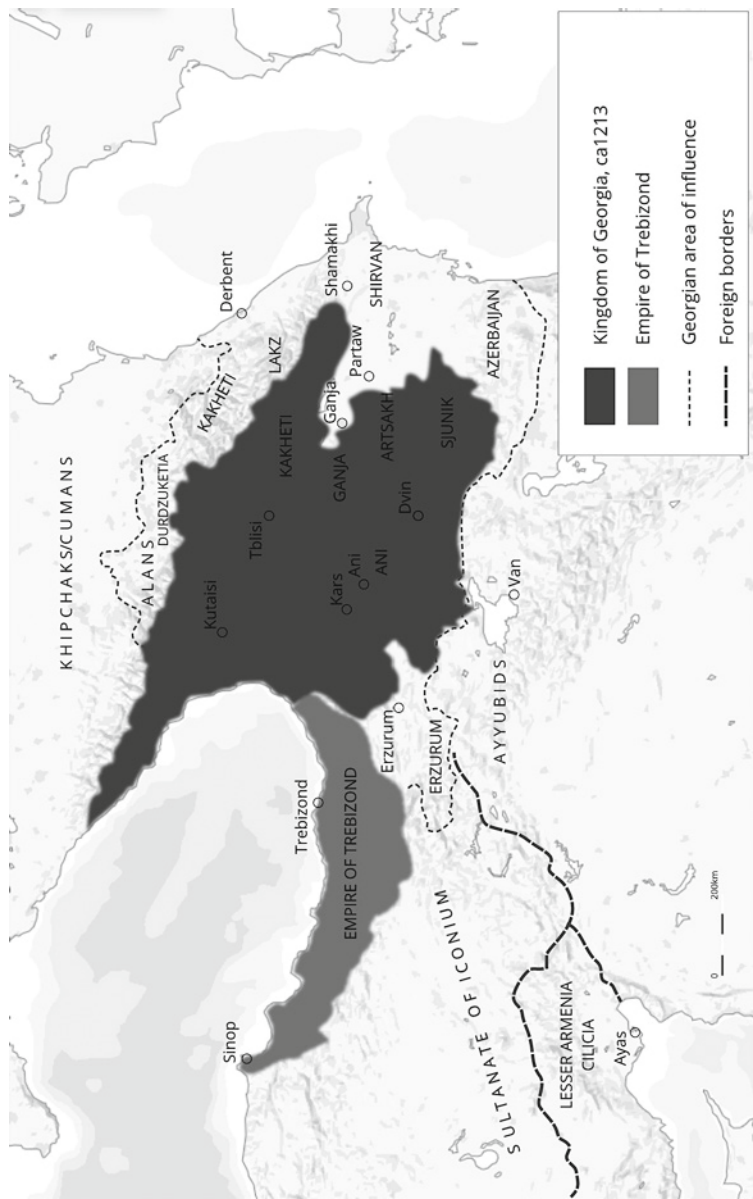
From Manzikert to 1204, a new picture emerged. In essence, the collapse of Byzantium and the consequent loss of control over the districts had strengthened the political role of peripheral cities and released those with

80 Balard, *La Romanie Génoise*, 134. The presence of a consul at this date, suggests that the settlement was not too recent.

81 Rapp, *Studies in Medieval Georgian Historiography*, 337–39; Eastmond, "The Empire of Trebizond," 48.

82 Vasiliev, "The foundation," 29.

83 On the political events of this period, see R.M. Shukurov, *Velikie Komniny i Vostok (1204–1461)*, Sankt Peterburg 2001; Id. – D.A. Korobejnikov, *Velikie Komniny, Sinop i Rym v 1223–1230 gg.*, «PSV», 3, Sankt Peterburg 1998, pp. 178–200; R.M. Shukurov, *Tjurki na pravoslavnom Pónte v XIII–XV vv.: nachal'nyj étap tjurkizacii?*, «Prichernomor'e v srednie veka», 2, Moskva 1995, pp. 68–103; Id., *Velikie Komniny i "sinopskij vopros" v 1254–1277 gg.*, «PSV», 4, Sankt Peterburg 2000, pp. 177–208; S.P. Karpov, *Latinskaja Romania*, Sankt Peterburg 2000, in particular chapter 3 (*Ljudi i obstojatel'stva*), pp. 128–214.



MAP 1.5 The Caucasus and Asia Minor at the death of Queen Tamar (1213)

high autonomous potential from fiscal and military pressure. Trebizond had benefited from this situation and had significantly increased its political and commercial role. From a political point of view, the Anatolian city became the first reference point of the Christian kingdom of Georgia. When the latter's end was approaching, the Komnenos were already heavily dependent upon the Sultanate of Rum. The Sultanate, on his part, never managed to impose its own direction on the politics of the young Trapezuntine empire. Economically, this was by then the springboard for merchants of different origins to launch themselves towards lucrative enterprises both at land and sea. In the first case, towards Byzantium and the northern Black Sea coasts (Crimea and Azov) and on land towards the Far East and Persia, through Tabriz. This city's commercial importance was growing through an extraordinary progression that reached its peak between the second half of the thirteenth and the first decades of the fourteenth century, under the Mongol government of the Ilkhans.⁸⁴ The flourishing Genoese and Venetian communities would eventually establish themselves in Trebizond, and their trade relations with the Caucasus would also gradually intensify, involving the cities of the coast: Lo Vati/Faxium, Sevastopol, and Batumi.

After the Crusade and the consequent birth of new powers, the Byzantine cultural tradition proved they had not exhausted their positive influence. Tension found complete expression in the young reign of Theodore Laskaris, who came to power near Nicaea. Thanks, among other factors, to its geographical position, the state offered fierce resistance to its neighboring powers, mainly the Latin Empire of Constantinople. In the east, the expansionist ambitions of the Rum Sultanate restrained the Empire of Nicaea, which didn't have an escape route via the Black Sea. During the first two decades of the thirteenth century, a succession of wars broke out between Theodore Laskaris and the new Latin Emperor Henry (r. 1206–1216), brother of Baldwin of Flanders. The entire region from the Balkans to Anatolia went through a long period of instability and uncertainty during which the Nicaean kingdom resisted the Seljuks on the one hand (Theodore's victory near Antioch in the spring of 1211) and the Latins on the other. Finally, towards the end of 1214, Henry and Theodore made peace. The event had a significant effect on the political equilibrium of the Pontine region because the two subjects, until then at war, recognized each other by respecting each other's borders. It was precisely this recognition that kept the eastern part of the Anatolian

84 For a thorough analysis of the strategic role of Tabriz in the international commerce between the 1290s and the 1330s, see Sinclair, *Eastern Trade*, especially ch. 1: *The documents and the routes*, 21–62.

Black Sea coast from fighting. The Rum Sultanate effectively functioned as a barrier that allowed the small Empire of Trebizond to live in safety, and this increased its role as a political and commercial reference point for the centers of both the Caucasus and Persia. The kingdom of Georgia met its end in 1220 when the Mongols, for the first time, poured into the borders of Azerbaijan and destroyed the political construction earnestly created by the Bagratids. That army, led by Chinggis Khan's generals, would change the history of an entire continent.

But the crusade was not an isolated event, ratcheted up to the Byzantine Empire and Asia Minor. The late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries saw the “armed” advance of Roman Christianity into a much broader political and social space. In the thirteenth century, a long series of conflicts transformed the Baltic world; wars decimated the peoples, others were incorporated de facto into the orbit of Western Christianity, and all had to accept the trade flow from the West brought by merchants who followed and sometimes took part directly in military operations. At least four new powers arose: the dominions of Livonia,⁸⁵ Prussia, the Duchies of Estonia, and Finland. The Papacy established a new archdiocese and eight new bishoprics: a religious prop against the idolatry and heterodoxy of Eastern Christianity. Religious control became capillary with the dislocation of dioceses throughout the territory and the presence of religious who pursued the work of conversion with zeal.⁸⁶ Thus, the Fourth Crusade was not an event limited to the Middle East and the Byzantine Empire, but had, as mentioned above, a decisive prologue in the first nomadic incursions into Asia Minor and the Caucasus. Moreover, it all resulted from a profound upheaval that was originally political and then religious. It was a global event that upset the political balance of the entire Pontus basin and destabilized most of the established powers in the north, where different peoples had been interacting with each other for centuries. In the end, it broke down an additional barrier, weakening the defensive potential of the Caucasian line.

85 Tamm, Kaljundi and Jensen, *Crusading and the Chronicle Writing*, 23–44; Bugiani, *Chronicon Livoniae*, XIII–XIV.

86 On the Crusade of the North scholarship is vast. Here it is enough to list some of the best monographs on the subject. E. Christiansen, *The Northern Crusade*; Johnson, *The German Crusade on the Baltic*, 545–65; Leciejewicz, *La nuova forma del mondo*.

North: The Pontic Steppes before the Mongol “Squall”

Cumans, Byzantium and Kievan Rus’

The region stretching from the middle of the Volga to the west of the lower Danube, embracing the natural isthmus between the Black and Caspian Sea, has undergone a barrage of steppe nomadic incursions at least since the first century. Ever since Tacitus wrote of the Sarmatians,¹ it has been a region whose various ethnicities have influenced political, cultural, and economic developments. It is equally true, therefore, that such evolution, ever since antiquity, has been a consequence of the interactions between the many peoples that have inhabited this dynamic geographic area.²

Today, this space lies between central-eastern Ukraine, southern Russia, and central-western Kazakhstan. The land there is made up almost entirely of plains, and some major rivers such as the Dnepr, Don, Volga, and Ural flow through it. If we drew an imaginary line along the parallel from Kiev to Aktyubinsk (in north-western Kazakhstan), we would see two morphologically similar areas, but two very different natural environments:³ forests dominate the plains north of our virtual line, while the southern sections are comprised of grasslands. The Urals make up a natural barrier to the north and a sea barrier protects the south. The northern zone is rich in water. The small streams we see today, in the past, were an essential source of water for the peoples who lived in the region. Looking at a map of central-eastern Europe, one immediately notices that the area west of the Caspian Sea is heavily urbanized, while in the east, the natural vocation of the soil has not yet undergone the tell-tale signs that people inevitably leave behind when agriculture is abandoned.

Knowledge of the geographical environment in which the influx of so-called nomad populations took place was also a necessity in the Middle Ages. We have a unique example of descriptions for the period we are considering here:

-
- 1 “Hiberi locorum potentes Caspia via Sarmatam in Armenios raptim effundunt [...]” and further on: “Enimvero apud Sarmatas non una vox ducis: se quisque stimulant, ne pugnam per sagittas sinerent: impetu et comminus praeveniendum”. Finally: “Sarmatae omissu arcu, quo brevius valent, contis gladiisque ruerent”, Tacitus, *Annali*, II, Book VI–XXXIII, pp. 409–13; see on this also Carile, “L’ecumene romano-cristiana,” 11–33; Bais, *Albania Caucasica*, 43–44.
 - 2 For the Caucasus, and Albania in particular, see the monograph by Marco Bais. Scholarship on ethnicity in the region is vast. See bibliography at the end of this book.
 - 3 It is a picture drew by A. Bartha, “The typology of nomadic empires,” 151–74.

the *De administrando imperio* of the Byzantine basileus of Constantine VII, Porphyrogenitus.⁴ The book dates from roughly the mid-tenth century and was written for educating the emperor's successors. Its focus is on the Byzantine frontiers and on diplomatic strategy with foreign peoples.⁵ In the centuries that followed, the political picture changed, and the *De administrando* became an out-of-date handbook of historical geography.⁶

For centuries, the steppe nomads have been a *tópos* according to reliable sources and written testimony from the era. Romans, Greeks, Byzantines all saw them as ‘others.’ Even historiography has focused part of its studies on the nomads: stressing their primitive forms of life, the crude means of exchange and above all – and a more serious error – such studies have underestimated their importance to the formative process of European identity. These positions have changed in recent years, thanks above all to the brilliant work and the reliable results achieved by historians who have reconsidered the problem with renewed rigor, relying on written sources and leaving aside national sentiments in a contemporary context where nationalism is emerging again.

Since the mid-eleventh century, and contextualized within the complex flux of nomadic migrations, the Cuman-Qipchaqs appear in the written sources with characteristics similar to other ethnic groups who had settled the steppes in previous centuries. The Qipchaqs would succumb to the blows of the Mongol army in the thirteenth century. These people represent the last stage of the extensive nomadism before the Mongol ‘stabilization’ of the steppe, a stabilization realized by building an organized system of power with territorial expressions, which, if initially was prone to creating a devastating impact on the conquered states, later fortified its urban character without ever becoming part of it as a constitutive element.⁷ The Mongols were nomads when they reached the Eastern European steppes.⁸ However, they soon entered a long phase of acculturation where progressive developments changed their organizational forms, although in different ways depending on the areas where they

4 Dvorník and Jenkins, *Constantine Porphyrogenitus*.

5 Obolensky, *The Byzantine Commonwealth*, 39–40.

6 Constantine pictures an itinerary that, from Thessaloniki, reaches Sotirioupolis (today Pizunda). The *De Administrando Imperio* is a detailed account of places, peoples, and geography. The Byzantine emperor describes the Danube, Belgrade, the Dniester river region and the Dnepr up to Cherson, in Crimea. He describes the Bosphorus and the Kerch strait. His account arrives to the mouth of the Don and covers the Meotian Lake (Azov Sea) and the Khazar empire.

7 This phenomenon is defined by anthropologists as *reidentification*, to highlight the changes in the nomadic structure towards a growing sedentariness.

8 The influence of the conquests on the Mongol social and economic structures is a complex subject. We will go over it in the next chapters.

built their khanates. In Caucasia, the processes of integration differed from region to region, from state to state.

On the eve of the Mongol invasion, the Qipchaqs dominated a vast area between the middle to lower course of the Volga and the Danube. The fourteenth century (1307) *History*, written by the Armenian nobleman Hayton of Gorichos, reports that

The kingdom of Komania is vast, but because of its hostile climate, it is a hard place to inhabit [...] to the east, the Kingdom of Komania borders the Kingdom of Khwarezm and a desert; in the west, with the Great Sea [Black Sea] and a small sea (called the Lim Sea [Azov]); in the north, with the Kingdom of Kassi [Rus]; in the south, it stretches as far as the great river Et'il [Volga]. The major city of the Kingdom of Komania is called Sarai. In the past, it was a noble and well-known city, but the Tatars who took it by force [attacked and almost completely destroyed it ...].⁹

In this passage, though, Hayton is mistaken, as the two Sarai (Batu and Berke) were both built by the Mongols and bear the names of two khans. Qipchaq groups also settled between the Caspian and Black Sea, and the Caucasus mountains were their southern border. They were nomads of Turkic origin, whose history is still unclear, yet they represent an indispensable group when it comes to investigating the region between the North-Central Caucasus and the Azov. There is little doubt that *at that time*, they were the “Absolute masters of the entire Dasht-i Qipchaq.”¹⁰

9 Hethum (Hayton) of Gorichos (d. before 1320) was the nephew of the Armenian king Hethum I (d. 1270) and wrote his treatise, *La Flor des Estoires de la Terre d'Orient* (The Flower of the Histories of the East), in 1307 upon the request of Pope Clement V. Hayton's *History* was later translated into Latin and widely circulated in Europe. Hayton was a professional soldier and direct witness of the events he narrates as he took part in numerous military expeditions as a local nobleman in the Mongol army. Here I have used two editions of his *Histoires*: “RHC” Documents arméniens, t. I, Paris 1869, pp. 469–490 e de *La Storia dei Tartari di Hayton Armeno*, in G.B. Ramusio, *Navigazioni e Viaggi* (from now on *La Flor*), vol. III, pp. 299–355, here at p. 352. For an excellent English translation and an excellent bibliography, see G. Burger, *A Lytell Cronycle*, Toronto 1988. See also Bundy, “Het'um”; Another very good English translation is by Armenist Robert Bedrosian, *The Flower of Histories of the East* (here <http://rbedrosian.com/hetumint.htm>). The site is no longer online, but the texts are accessible here <http://www.attalus.org/armenian/hetumtoc.html>, last visit July 15th, 2020).

10 Grekov and Jakubovskij, *L'Orda d'Oro*, 6. Desht-i-Kipchak (*steppes of the Qipchaqs*) is the name of the northern Pontic steppe in the Arab and Persian sources.

Although the Caucasus' *terrain and ecology* are extraordinarily diverse, we cannot ascribe its ethnic complexity entirely to environmental determinism. It is true, though, that the environmental factor is the root of human behavior that effectively underlines the salient features of nomadism.¹¹ The morphological characteristics of the Caucasus, from south to north, have played a fundamental role in political and military events that have shaped the progressive formation of the ethnic fabric of the populations that lived there.¹² Nevertheless, these conditions alone do not explain the movements of the nomads to the northern Caucasian steppes. Structural characteristics and social dynamics determined developments not at all accidental but closely linked to the intrinsic dimension of that society, which includes the whole of its members. The study of a nomadic community through written sources risks diverting attention to aspects that the authors considered prominent but were not at all critical for the groups they described.

If, for modern scholars, it is difficult to investigate these models and the role they played in a comprehensive historical picture of the period being studied, it was no easier for contemporary writers. They looked at the nomads with certain prejudices that bore the cultural baggage of the society they knew well and grew up in. Therefore, it is not surprising that Niketas Choniates, John Kinnamos, Anna Komnene, the authors of the Russian Chronicles, Robert of Clari or Otto of Freising – to name but a few who described the steppe nomads, and the Cumans in particular – define them as barbarians, and fundamentally as an untenable and distant model worthy only of total rejection.¹³ In some ways, the movements of the nomads that settled in the steppes before the Mongol conquest are very similar to the migrations that penetrated Western Europe from the fifth to the seventh centuries, causing the beginning of what

11 Tosi, "Dalla tribù all'impero," 247.

12 Carile, "Il Caucaso e l'impero bizantino," 9–80; Pritsak, "The Turcophone peoples," 223–45; Garsoïan and Martin Hisard, "Unité et diversité," 275–47.

13 The description by Robert of Clari is particularly interesting because he was not a professional intellectual, but a knight who personally participated in the Fourth Crusade. His account is the only Western "point of view" from that period. His words confirm the naïve exaggeration with which he overlaps his perception to the reality he describes: "They are a savage people who do not plough and do not sow, who have no houses or farms, they only have felt tents, a refuge where they hide, and they live off milk, cheese and meat [...]. Each one of them has at least ten or twelve horses; they have trained them so that they follow them wherever they want to take them and now they ride on one and now on the other [...]. They worship nothing but the first animal they meet in the morning; he who meets him worships him all day long, whatever animal he is."; Roberto di Clari, *La conquista di Costantinopoli*, 196–197. An excellent English edition of Robert of Clari is Holmes McNeal, *The Conquest of Constantinople*, 87.

we call – according to one of our long-established cultural categories – the Western Middle Ages.¹⁴ Despite the efforts made by Russian historiography, especially of the Soviet period (but not only),¹⁵ to draw a coherent evolutionary interpretation of the Qipchaq presence in the steppes, experts have not been able to come to a definitive conclusion.

The sources on the Qipchaqs are comparatively scarce and are concentrated for the most part in the writings of Byzantine historians, the Russian Chronicles, Arab and Persian writings of the era. Considering that this material deals primarily with political and military concerns, we can re-examine specific problems that arise from investigating these people and their role in the Dasht-i Qipchaq.¹⁶ The written sources are principally narrative in structure (i.e., chronicles, histories) and pose two impediments: linguistic and typological. Because of the wide spectrum of languages, a transversal effort, that involves more scholarship, is necessary to investigate these authors and their literature. Narrative sources express a point of view. The absence of documentary testimonies makes it hard to contextualize the information and turn it into historical fact.

Nevertheless, such written sources are precious. Among the very informative historical literature are certain Western accounts (from the mid-thirteenth century on), like the travels of John Plano Carpini, William of Rubruck and Benedict the Pole. Armenian, Bulgarian, and Romanian literature is essential as well as Arabic and Persian historians' accounts. Archaeological, numismatic, and toponymic sources help expand our knowledge of nomads. This occurs due to the interdisciplinary nature of the subject, which has attracted the efforts of Byzantinists, Slavists, Turkologists and others.

In Germany and the Soviet Union extremely important studies have been undertaken and have therefore contributed to the growth of the subject in the twentieth century. The monograph by A. Khazanov (Khazanov 1984) was a forerunner, especially when the English translation was published in 1984. Since the late 1980s, the Viennese scholars have been researching the theme of ethnicity and have contributed to clearing up deep-rooted prejudices about

14 On the other hand, one of the peoples who most frightened Christian Europe, the Huns, were originally from Asia. In the middle of the fifth century, they had conquered a vast territory and the displacement of the Hunnic hordes to Western Europe was among the causes that accelerated the collapse of the Roman Empire.

15 Golubovskij, "Pechenegi, torki i polovcy"; Grigor'ev, "Ob otnoshenijax"; Ljaskoronskij, *Russkie poxody*; Kudrjashov, "O mestopolozhenii poloveckix"; Diaconu, "K voprosu"; Pletneva, "Pechenegi, torki i polovcy"; Id., *Poloveckaja zemlja*; Rasovskij, "Polja poloveckogo," 158ff.; Id., "Rol' polovcev"; Id., "Voennaja istorija polovcev"; Id., "Pecheneghi," 9–18; Bibikov, "Istochnikovedcheskie problem,"; Pletneva, *Polovcy*; Tolochko, *Kochevyje narody*.

16 Skrzhinskaja, *Rus', Italija i Vizantija*, 36–89; Bibikov, *Vizantijskie istochniki*, 83–98 and 199–293; Kudrjashov, "O mestopolozhenii."

the steppe nomads. Thanks to their research, a wide range of factors – environment, economy, social life, etc. – became indispensable for studying the nomads from a fresh perspective.¹⁷ The keen interest of American scholars in steppe nomads is a further boost to the progress of knowledge on these people and their interactions with the great ancient and medieval civilizations.

1 Some Remarks on the Origin of the Cumans

Scholarship on the ethnogenesis of the Cumans and relations with their neighbors – both sedentary and other nomads – until the end of the twelfth century, is vast and of a very high scientific quality. The studies of Peter Golden have shed light where shadow *was once conforing*.¹⁸ The ethnonym (*Qipchaqs*, *Cumans*, *Polovcians*) is a term we use for convenience, and explains itself the complexity of this nomadic union.

In the written sources, the Cuman-Qipchaqs appear under a variety of names. For the Russians they were *Polovcy* (Polovcians), for the Latins and Byzantines, Cumans (or *Komanoi*). The Turks called them *Qipchaqs*, the Arab-Persian sources speak of *Qoumani* or *Qipčaki*, and the Hungarians called them *Kun*. This onomastic confusion is due to more than one factor. Firstly, steppe nomads were mobile and fluid human aggregations, so it was challenging to get a precise knowledge of them for those who were unfamiliar with this context. Our knowledge of the steppe nomads comes almost exclusively from 'other' sources. The Cumans have left us no written record. Secondly, the nomads used different names to define themselves. Myth and legend were part of their collective identity.¹⁹ Finally, we must not forget what we have already mentioned: the 'outside' observers (Byzantine, Slav, Persian authors, etc.) even if, to a different extent, had strong prejudices against these populations. They considered them as identical to other groups with which they might have no

17 See for example the collection of essays by W. Pohl, *Le origini etniche dell'Europa. Barbari e Romani tra Antichità e Medioevo*, «Alto Medioevo», Roma 2000; in particular the second part *L'Europa Orientale e il mondo delle steppe*, pp. 181–287; W. Pohl – H. Reimitz, *Strategies of distinction: the construction of ethnic communities, 300–800*, Leiden 1998; W. Pohl, *Kingdom of the Empire, the integration of Barbarians in Late Antiquity*, New York (NY), Leiden, Köln 1997.

18 See the general bibliography at the end of the book for a detailed list of publications on this matter.

19 Pohl, *Le origini etniche*, 188. All the works of P. Golden are fundamental. Some of them were collected in *Nomads and their Neighbours* cit. See part 1: "Imperial Ideology and the Sources of Political Unity Amongst the Pre-Chinggisid Nomads of Western Eurasia", and: iv: "The Turkic Peoples and Caucasia".

connection. The names used by written sources to describe the nomads were political rather than ethnic labels.

Since their appearance in the written sources, the Qipchaqs were considered a part of the Turkish Ghuz (Oghuz), but they were distinct from the other branch of the Oghuz, the Seljuks.²⁰ Contrary to what happened with the Seljuks, who invaded the Near East after embracing Islam, the Cuman-Qipchaqs remained pagan²¹ decades after the Mongolian conquest.

They were likely part of the Siberian-born Turkic group Kimek and came from the middle Irtysh or the Oby. There is no certainty about their origins in any sense, even geographical. However, they were probably from the area where the Irtysh and the Ob converge across the Ural Mounts. Islamic sources mention them since at least the ninth century.²² According to the Arab historian Gardizi,²³ the Kipchaks separated from the rest of the Kimeks by moving west in the middle of the eleventh century. The first mention of the Qipchaqs in Central Asia (Khorazm) in the Persian sources dates to 1031.²⁴ Around 1140, they had occupied the vast swath of territory between the Lower Volga and Dnepr, up to the Lower-middle Danube, a position that would determine their subsequent scattered settlements. The Danube Cumans or “Lukomor” lived between the Danube and Dnepr and helped to settle the Dnepr Cumans or the Zaporozhe. The Cumans who lived along the coast settled between the Dnepr and the lower course of the Don, and the Donets Cumans settled between the high Donets and the Tor. While the Don Cumans settled in the Don Basin. Finally, the Orel Cumans settled between the Orel and the Samara (see map 2.1).²⁵

20 Golden, “Imperial Ideology,” 49–50.

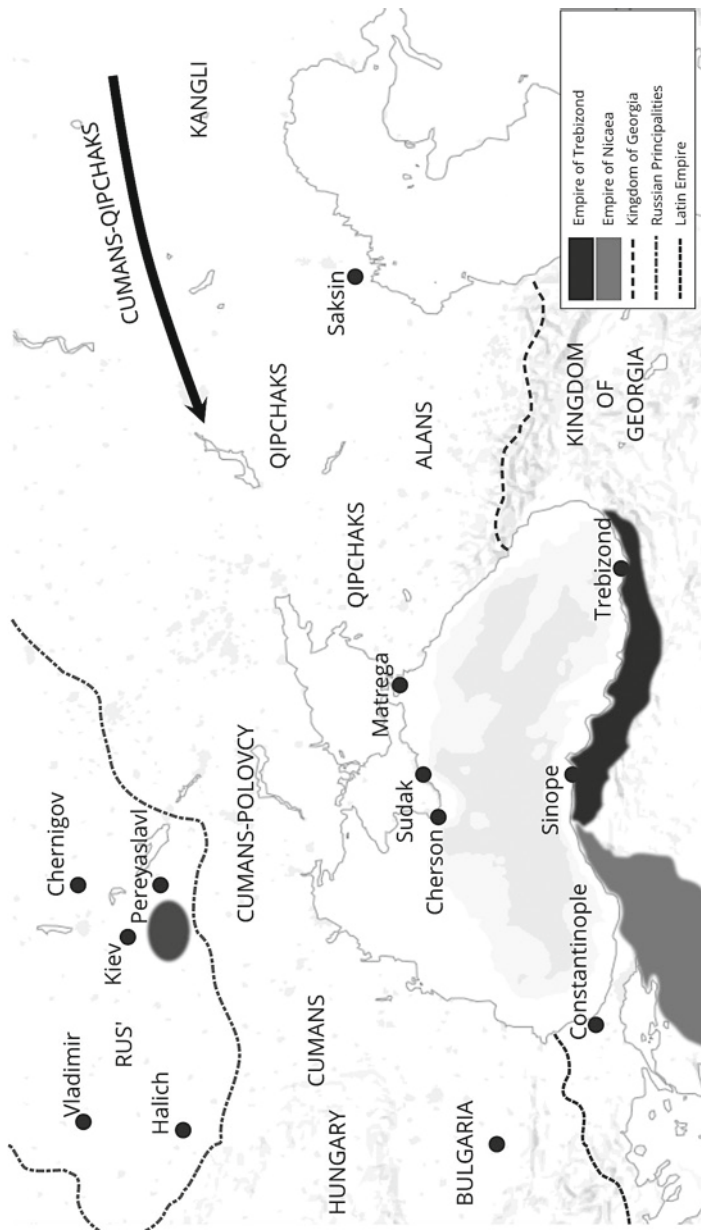
21 Pritsak, “The Turcophone peoples,” 239; Golden, *An introduction*; Golden, *Wolves, Dogs and Qipčaq Religion* 87–97, repr. in *Nomads and their Neighbours* cit., part. xiv.

22 Old, but still fundamental are Grousset, *L'empire des steppe*, 241; Bartold, *Turkestan* (in the Russian original edition, the first vol. contains part of the sources used by Bartold for his monograph). The sources are confused on the location of Kimäks, perhaps because of the continuous movements of these peoples and because of their dispersal/ranging throughout a vast territory. The Kimäks were nomad shepherds and fur hunters. The only stable settlement of the Kimaks was the summer residence of heir khan, Namakiyya. Bosworth, *Kimāk*, Enc. Islamica, v, 107–08. Richard, *La papauté*, 20–33.

23 Gardizi was a Persian historian connected to the Ghaznavids, and active since the mid-eleventh century. Nothing about his life is known. He wrote a *history*, written between 1049 and 1052: *Zayn al-akhbar*. Only fragments of Gardizi's text are translated in English (E.G. Browne, Berlin-London 1928). See also Bosworth, “Early Sources,” 3–22.

24 Golev, “On the Edge,” 94 and Golev, “The Cuman-Qipchaqs,” 39–40. The information comes from the Ottoman theologian and juror Bahavi. See also Bartold, *Turkestan*, p. 296 and Lewis, *The Balance of Truth*.

25 According to a division proposed by Kudryashov (“Poloveckaja step’,” 134); see also Grekov and Jakubovskij, *L'Orda d'Oro*, 7–8. A part on the locations and names of the Cuman



MAP 2.1 Cuman settlements in the Northern Pontic steppe

All these groups were nomads, alien to urban culture, but should not for this reason be considered ‘primitive.’ Climatic conditions and territorial morphology made adaptation necessary. This allowed the various Cumans to refine forms of survival that were modeled on a particular environment. They managed for example to settle the Pontic region without ever building a social structure that was firmly based on land exploitation. Nomadism remained the basis of their productive system, and livestock was both their primary source of subsistence and most valuable possession. It is still uncertain whether the Cuman social organization, upon the arrival of the Mongols into the Northern Caucasian steppes, was undergoing a transition to more articulated ways of production.²⁶

The written sources are discordant in using the ethnonyms: Cumans, Komanoi, Kun, and Qipchak. According to the Romanian historian Diaconu,²⁷ Kumani comes from the Turkic word Kum (steppes, plain, sand), and the inhabitants of the prairies, kum, would be Kumani. The ethnonym used by Russian sources, however, gives rise to different questions. Where does the word Polovcy even come from in the first place? And then why in Russian is there an original name, that is effectively ‘autonomous,’ while the other sources, Byzantine, Western, Arabic-Persian, use the original ethnonym even in its natural variation? Another question that arises is whether it is an autonomous name – or whether it is indicative of a type of cast? It is a problem that only initially concerns linguistics because its implications are historical.

The Polovcy entered into the picture of the history of Rus’ in 1154 and soon became the *topos* of pagan, Godless nomads. Their fulminous raids had devastating effects on the Russian countryside.²⁸ The records portray the Polovcy as a calamity, a constant danger with which the population of Russian

groups, it is noteworthy how they occupied, rather quickly, a vast region. Omelian Pritsak followed Kudryashov’s division and identified twelve subgroups of Cuman aggregations. Pritsak, “The Polovcians and Rus’,” 342–43; Golden, “Cumanica I,” 54.

26 Bartold wrote that the city of Sighnāq was situated in the region of Syr-Darya (circa present-day Kazakhstan), between Zhand and Fārāb. It was dominated by the “dominion of the pagan Khipchaks”, opposed to the Seljuks, already islamized. Thus, the nomad Cumans were not completely stranger to urban civilization and it is likely that they regularly traded with merchants from the Central Asian cities in the frontier regions. In fact, Sighnāq will remain an important political center also during the Mongol rule. Cfr. Bartold, *Turkestan*, 178–79.

27 Diaconu, *Les Coumans au Bas-Danube*, p. 9.

28 Hazard Cross and Shebowitz-Wetzor, *Russian Primary Chronicle* (from now on *RPC*) 143, sub anno 1061: “The Polovcians invaded Rus’ to make war for the first time.” “[...] The Polovcians defeated Vsevolod, but after the combat they retired. This was the first evil done by these pagan and godless foes”.

principalities had to coexist. Therefore, the origin of the term should be seen in the light of the complex relations developed between the nomads and their Slavic neighbors.²⁹

According to an initial theory put forward by A. Kunik in 1875,³⁰ Polovcy derives from the old Russian word *polovyyj* (yellowish, straw), hence an origin derived from the physical appearance including the skin and the hair of their neighbors.³¹ According to Miklosich,³² the ethnonym may derive not from the physical appearance of the Polovcy, but from the fact that there was a horde, the Blue Horde, and it is from this that the name would derive. Sobolevsky³³ agrees with this theory and adds that even in Russian, the word *polovyyj* is sometimes used, in a vernacular form, to refer to blue oxen. There was no Blue Horde among the Polovcy. In the early post-war years, Gordlyevsky³⁴ proposed an alternative theory: Polovcy is the translation of the word Kipchak and not, as accepted up to that point, of Kumani. Rashid ad-Din, one of the most reliable fourteenth-century Persian historians, in his *History*,³⁵ argues that *kipak* would mean "a hollow tree" and that it is to be interpreted as a combination of lawn and Polovcy (the grassland/steppe of the Polovcy). Rightly Elena Skrzhinskaya noticed that there are no traces, in Russian, Byzantine, and

29 Skrzhinskaja, *Rus', Italija i Vizantija*, 38.

30 See Dorn, "Kaspij. O poxodax drevnix rusov v Tabaristan," 387; Skrzhinskaja, *Rus', Italija i Vizantija*, 45.

31 Russian *polova* (Old Church Slavonic *plava*) means *straw*.

32 Miklosich, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 154; Skrzhinskaja, *Rus', Italija i Vizantija*, 65.

33 Sobolevskij, "Neskol'ko étimologicheskix nazvanij," 175; Rasovskij, "Polovcy," 255.

34 Gordlevskij, "Chto takoe bosyj volk?," 317–37.

35 A first, partial edition, of Rashid ad-Din's *History*, was published by E. Quatremère, *Histoire des Mongols de la Perse*, t. 1, 1836; see also C. D'Ohsson, *Histoire des Mongols depuis Tchinguiz-qan jusqu'à Timour Bey ou Tamerlane* 4 voll., Amsterdam 1834–35; another good translation is in Russian: J. Berezin, *Sbornik letopis'ej. Istoria Mongolov, sochinenie Rashid – Eddina*, Travaux SOSRA, t. v, 1858, the Persian text was published in 1861. Also Bartold, *Turkestan* cit., and the excellent, albeit old, E. Blochet, *Introduction à l'histoire des Mongols*, Leiden-London 1910. Fragments were translated by the great orientalist J.A. Boyle, *The Successors* cit. The complete work of Rashid is huge and Boyle selected some excerpts from Ögedei to Temur. The most complete edition in Russian is Rashid ad-din, *Jami' at-tawarikh*, «Sbornik Letopis'ej», tomo I (2 voll.) trans. and ed. by L.A. Ketagurov e O.I. Smirnova, Moskva-Leningrad 1952; tomo. II trans. and ed. by Ju.P. Verkovskij, Moskva-Leningrad 1960; vol. III trans. And ed. by A.K. Arends, Baku (1946) 1957. This is the edition I have used (from now on RaD) alternated to Boyle (from now on Boyle, *The successors*). A more recent and excellent edition is in English by W.M. Thackston, *Rashiduddin Fazlullah's Jami'ü't-Tawarikh: Compendium of Chronicles: a History of the Mongols*, Harvard (MS) 1998, that I have used in some more complicated passages. On Rashid's *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh*, see the recent study of Kamola, "Salghurid History," 122–45.

Western sources, of this word;³⁶ it is mentioned only by Rashid ad-Din who, we must remember, wrote his *History* long after, in the early years of the fourteenth century.

The most authoritative Russian etymological dictionaries – examined by E. Skrzhinskaya – give different explanations.³⁷ Otto of Freising³⁸ uses a different ethnonym to define the Cumans: “quod ne cui incredibile videatur, audiat quod Pecenati et hii qui Falones dicuntur”. The German adjective *falb* means light yellow, cream yellow, or reddish yellow used primarily to designate the color of horses. In Old High German is *fahl* (shabby) whose root is *palitá* (Greek *poliós*, *pelitrós*, dimmed gray, it is the Latin *pallere*, in modern English it is the word fallow, now disused). The term used by Otto and the Russian term have a similar meaning. We can hypothesize that the German bishop had learned this ethnonym from the Russians, since in the first half of the twelfth century, they both frequented the trade route connecting Kiev to Regensburg: a course consisting of some of the most important trading hubs of Eastern Europe.³⁹

It is not possible to establish with certainty when the Cuman domination of the Dasht-i Qipchaq began. But since the second half of the eleventh century, they appear sporadically and do not seem to be a cohesive military and political force capable of a dangerous offensive. However, in 1087, they materialize in Anna Komnene's *Alexiad* as a stable presence and with changed prerogatives.

2 Early Raids

As we have mentioned above, it is difficult to define the Eastern European steppes geographically. Just as it is complicated to focus on the relationships that these nomadic peoples had with their neighbors and to try and understand how they interacted with one another. Between the 1930s and 1960s, there was a lively scholarly debate, especially in the USSR, between those who attributed a destructive vocation to the Polovcy and those who attributed the Orthodox Church with the creation of an unfounded myth regarding the ferocity of these *pagan* people whose relations with the Russian principalities would have been substantially peaceful. Equally animated was the scientific discussion (but it would be better to say ideological) among Marxist Russian historians. The discussion focused on nomadic feudalism, which is the existence of a feudal

36 Skrzhinskaja, *Rus', Italija i Vizantija*, 65.

37 Ibid., 66–68.

38 Otto Frisingensis bishop (1114 ca.–1158). *Otonis episcopi Frisingensis Chronica*, VI, 10.

39 Skrzhinskaja, *Rus', Italija i Vizantija*, 60; Rybakov, *Istorija Kul'tury Drevnej Rusi*, 342–43.

structure among these communities in a time when they were progressively abandoning nomadism for the benefit of a more stable and coherent relationship with the territory and, therefore, with agricultural production. This topic will be treated at length later in the text.

Scholars agree on the periodization of the nomadic migrations into the Northern Caucasian steppes. More complicated are the consequences that the migrations had on the defeated groups. When the Cumans arrived in the northern Pontic steppes, they pushed the Pechenegs westward, provoking a more or less rapid disappearance of the latter's ethnic element. Their absorption into traditionally sedentary populations whose borders were subjected to an organized power (Byzantium and the Kingdom of Bulgaria in the beginning) and the breakdown into elements that we can later find altered in different contexts.

Before the Mongol invasion, the Cumans populated for a century and a half the territory overlooking the two seas of Caucasia: The Black Sea and the Caspian. An area located between the Dnepr and the Ural rivers. Until the 1230s, the region went through a long season of not only political but above all ethnic and cultural changes of considerable magnitude. The ethnogenesis of the peoples who occupied these lands is another fascinating aspect that deserves further investigation.⁴⁰ The incursions of the first nomadic populations, especially the Pechenegs, destabilized the region. However, their passage into the Southern Russian steppes had been a relatively brief step towards stabilization in the basin of the lower Danube from where they had many problems with Byzantium.

The profound political change that took place in the territories of the Southern Russian steppes due to the Russian princes occupying Kiev, the violent ousting of the Magyars, and – at the beginning – the Khazar decline all managed to facilitate the settlement of new nomadic peoples. The Khazar elites had converted to Judaism⁴¹ in the eighth century and had contributed decisively to maintaining the south-central territories of the eastern steppes; they now came to lose their hegemony around the city that would go on to become the capital of Rus'. The wars between the Khazars and Kievan Rus' continued during the tenth century with increasing frequency until 965, the

40 Ethnicity is nowadays reassessed by anthropologists, historians, sociologists, and other specialists. For an exhaustive scholarly debate, see the vast scientific production by Walter Pohl and Peter B. Golden (both in bibliography). See also Geary, "Barbarians and Ethnicity," 107–29; Geary, "Ethnic identity as a situational construct," 15–26; Geary, *The Myth of Nations*; Gillet, *On Barbarian Identity*.

41 Golden, "The Conversion of the Khazars to Judaism," 123 and 127; Pritsak, "The Turcophone peoples," 236.

year when Sarkel (on the middle course of the Don) fell. Sarkel was a significant city to the Khazar Empire because of its location, at the gateway of the so-called Khazar route, that connected the Don to the Volga.

The Rus' then conquered the Khazar territory of Tmutarakan', at the gate of the Azov Sea (the Cimmerian Bosphorus), but failed to secure an outlet on the Caspian. After decades of wars, Byzantines, Pechenegs and Rus', the Khazar Kaganate finally collapsed (Sarkel fell in 965, three years later Etil capitulated too).⁴² Neither of the two winners, however, managed to settle rapidly enough in the conquered territories. The lack of a center of power that could define borders and limits of sovereignty by defending them favored the prompt and constant infiltration of nomadic and semi-nomadic populations from the East and the North.

Pechenegs and then Qipchaqs advanced after the collapse of the Khazar Empire. The Cuman affirmation in the Northern Caucasian steppes represented an important and coherent link between Byzantium and the principalities of Kievan Rus' and limited the expansionist ambitions of both. At the same time, it has long maintained a vast network of relationships, initially through commercial ties, with both political actors.⁴³

At first, the movements, in the form of raids, carried out by Turkic nomads, occurred in the early twelfth century, and were the work of myriad groups, a combination of cells that were ethnically distinct.⁴⁴ Bibikov speaks expressly of the Pecheneg-Turkic union.⁴⁵ We have already mentioned that the reality of the steppe was fluid. The dominant clans sought to promote, "the integration of all peoples on horseback in the vicinity"⁴⁶ because this was their strength. The life cycle of one clan's influence over the other lasted only two to three generations. This situation necessitated aggregations in a context of general ideological tolerance in favor of more inclusive objective cohesion. Byzantine sources speak indiscriminately of Scythians to indicate that the nomads had settled on the borders of the empire. Moreover, a large number of Byzantine sources deal with the relationship between the empire and the nomads. Scythian is the ethnonym used to designate ethnic groups who preceded the

42 The Byzantine author John Skylitzes mentions a naval attack ordered by Emperor Basil II against the Khazars in 1016. The information is unlikely to be true. For a thorough analysis on it, see Howard-Johnston, "Byzantine sources," 169 and n. 25. For a reassessment of the last period of the Khazar Khaganate, see Petruhin, "Khazaria and Rus'."

43 Rybakov, *Istoriya kul'tury*; Ponomarev, "Kumany-Polovcy," 366–70; Skrzhinskaja, *Rus', Italija i Vizantija*, 36–89.

44 Bibikov, *Vizantijskie istochniki*, 231–32.

45 Ibid., 47–52.

46 Pohl, *Le origini etniche*, 186; see on this also Golden, "Imperial Ideology".

Cumans in this area, and whose geographical location seems clear in the minds of the authors. In particular, the Pechenegs/Patzinaki are Scythes.⁴⁷ The same ethnonym is used by Samuel of Ani, to generically indicate Turkic nomads, on the occasion of the first crusade, when the raids penetrated in Thracia.⁴⁸

After stabilizing relations with the Magyars (the foundation of the Hungarian⁴⁹ state by the Árpád dynasty at their final location west of the Danube, between the Carpathian and the Transylvanian Alps), the empire faced a new threat in the Pechenegs. Written testimonies on the relations between Byzantium and the nomadic peoples that settled on the borders of the empire clearly reveal that such connections went through a variety of phases. After an initial nonviolent period during which the empire attempted to maintain peaceful relations with the Pechenegs, the situation changed instantly when the nomads joined the anti-Byzantine campaign of the Russian prince Svjatoslav.⁵⁰ From the fall of the Khazar Empire to the settlement of the Pechenegs on the northern and northeastern borders of the empire, Byzantium adopted a "consistent diplomacy of the steppe"⁵¹ towards Transcaucasia and the Danube region. This attitude helped the empire maintain peace between those populations that could constitute a barrier against potential aggression from the East and the North. The Byzantines, as we have seen, could not afford to lose control over the Black Sea ports. The Pontus was the empire's food – primarily grain – warehouse. The imperial authorities had always denied Western ships access beyond the Bosphorus.⁵² The steppe nomads from the Caucasus to the Danube effectively acted as a shield for the Byzantine Empire, a barrier that they could lower at any time and indeed turn against it. These were the northern and eastern borders of what D. Obolensky called the Byzantine Commonwealth.⁵³

47 Bibikov, *Vizantijskie istochniki*, 232. So is in Anna Komnene, Kinnamos, Niketas Choniates, Johannis Tzetze and Michael Psellus. However, Anna Komnene uses also the ethnonym *Cumans* precisely and distinguishing the from the Pechenegs/Scythians (see note 64).

48 "The Romans crossed Thracia and penetrated into Asia to revenge the Christians of the troubles suffered by the Scythians, the Persians and the Dadjigs (Arabs)", Samuel Anetsi, *Chronique Universelle*, 447.

49 Obolensky, *The Byzantine Commonwealth*, 212–15.

50 Ibid., especially ch. vi, 164–201.

51 According to A. Carile, "Il Caucaso e l'impero bizantino," 37.

52 Byrne, *Genoese Shipping*; Mallet, *The Florentine Galleys*; Forcheri, *Navi e navigazioni a Genova*; Lopez, *Su e giù per la storia di Genova*; Musso, *Navigazione e commercio*; Balard, *La Romanie Génoise*; Martin, *The First Venetians in the Black Sea*, 111–122; Laiou, *The Byzantine Economy*, 177–222; Ashtor, *Levant Trade*; Ashtor, *Storia economica e sociale*; Pistorino, *I Gin dell'Oltremare*; Karpov, *Ital'janskije morskije respubliki*; Karpov, *La navigazione veneziana*.

53 Obolensky, *The Byzantine Commonwealth*; Carile, "Il Caucaso e l'impero bizantino," 38.

It is perhaps superfluous to point out that the concepts of border and frontier overlapped. It is also worth elaborating on what the Byzantines considered to be their cultural or ideological border, which for them marked the physical limits of civilization and beyond which there was only a barbaric world revolving around the empire and its capital.⁵⁴ These limits for Byzantium were represented to the east by the Caucasus and the Euphrates.⁵⁵ Within this civilized world, there is the Christian “ecumene”, an integral part of the empire. So those Christian populations – geographically outside the empire – had to be recovered.⁵⁶ The nomads living on the imperial frontier were pagan, therefore they would have been considered strangers to the “recoverable” ecumene. They were «omnium paganorum crudelissimi»,⁵⁷ enemies of the empire. This did not prevent Byzantine diplomacy as the result of an accurate calculation, aimed at controlling the borders to ensure peaceful coexistence amongst various peoples. Borders, physically understood, have always been rarefied and far from clear. Byzantine functionaries in the frontier regions established a connection with the empire.⁵⁸

The Byzantine policy on their eastern borders was reinforced for the first time as a consequence of Arabic incursions. The empire no longer considered the eastern borders safe and changed the fortification system of the cities situated in these regions. The next turning point in the organization of the “limes” occurred precisely on the occasion of the first nomadic incursions. According to H. Ahrwailer, this is the period when the Caucasian borders to the east and north of the Pontus take on the physically and culturally discontinuous character that for Byzantium would no longer change.⁵⁹ The eastern border was for Byzantium the frontier par excellence. It represented the subtle separation between two worlds that felt mutually hostile and culturally diverse. The arrival, between the tenth and twelfth centuries, of nomadic populations from the East highlights all the limits of this border policy. The local populations – never fully assimilated – were not an adequate enough restraint when confronted with the Cuman advance and then later on the Mongol

54 Ahrwailer, “La frontière et les frontières,” 209–230; Carile, “L’Ecumene romano-cristiana,” 11–33; Carile, “I nomadi nelle fonti bizantine,” 55–87.

55 Ahrwailer, “La frontière et les frontières,” 209–210.

56 Ibid., 210–211; Carile, *L’ecumene romano-cristiana*, 11–33.

57 *Epistola Brunonis*, 224; Obolensky, *The Byzantine Commonwealth*, 235–43.

58 Ahrwailer, “La frontière et les frontières,” 215.

59 Ibid., 219.

invasions. Between the battles of Manzikert (1071) and Myriokephalon (1176), the Byzantine eastern frontier underwent a process of *nomadization*.⁶⁰

As rapid as this process was, Byzantium often resorted, as mentioned, to diplomacy. The shape of this system of relations, cleverly constructed by imperial diplomacy, changed in the second half of the eleventh century when the Pechenegs were wiped out by the Cumans. They were also part of the *nomadization process* mentioned above; indeed, they *were* the last realization before the structural change imposed by the Mongols.

We tend to think of these centuries as a period characterized by a confused succession of ethnic groups, where the strongest wiped out the weakest, erasing all traces of those who came before them. It has never been like this. The primary sources effectively demonstrate that the situation was much more complicated. The process that gradually led the nomads to settle in the steppe territories was a succession of heterogeneous groups leaning on a constant ethnic substrate, the modifications of which over time were minimal. There were of course times when a massive infiltration of new peoples arrived in the region. However, they merged with those who came before them, resulting in minimal change to the already existing peoples' ethnic diversity. In part such diversity is still visible today in the entire Caucasus.

3 The Relationships with Neighbors: Byzantium and Rus'

In the *Alexiad*, Anna Komnene describes the war with the Scythians that took place between 1087–1090.⁶¹ The Scythians she refers to are still the Pechenegs, whose raids were concentrated to the lower Danube area. Shortly after Anna states that "a man called Tatus" [commander of the Pechenegs] "departed [from the town of Dristra] in order to create an alliance with the Cumans". Based on this information, we can surmise that if Alexios' armies had taken Dristra (excluding the fortified area), which is on the Danube, and if Tatus had to leave in order to ask for Cuman assistance, then the latter should be in close proximity to the battlefield.⁶² The Cumans were close to the Danube, but they had not yet defeated and expelled the Pechenegs.⁶³

60 Ibid., 228.

61 Anna Comnena, *Alexiade*, vol II.VII, 87.

62 Ibid., II.VII, 95. This is the first case in which Anna uses the ethnonym *Cumans*, demonstrating to distinguish between the Cumans and the Pechenegs (Scythians).

63 Ibid., II.VII, 95. This is the passage: "Paleologos and Gregory Maurokatakalon, agreed to differentiate the fight against the Patzinaks, suggested to occupy militarily the great Prislava" (Stamboul, Leib, p. 95, note 3); Bromberg, "Toponymical and historical

The Cumans turn up again in the *Alexiad* at the end of the battle mentioned above. The “barbarians” defeated the imperial troops, and the Cumans (who we can recall were being contacted by Tatus) arrived at the battlefield too late. The Scythians, in any case, did not need their help. According to Anna, the Cuman and Pecheneg leaders argued about the spoils-of-war on this occasion. The written sources do mention how the situation ended, and the Byzantine princess could not know precisely the terms of the agreements between the Pechenegs and Cumans. The clash following the arrival of the Turkic troops near the Danube against the winners of Dristra was a tremendous event whose consequences proved to be very positive for Byzantium. The empire had lost the decisive battle, but the *Scythians* proved incapable of inflicting the coup de grâce on the defeated as they faced a new opponent: the Cumans, and “the Scyths were completely beaten.”⁶⁴ Some Byzantinists have emphasized the importance of the Cuman intervention. They went from being considered ‘executioners’ to the saviors of Byzantium in a very short time span.⁶⁵ For the next two years (1088–89) robbery and rapid raids, sudden attacks, and looting organized in the border areas marked the relations between the empire and the nomads. There were, however, no more violent confrontations on a large scale. The Byzantine diplomacy effectively succeeded in avoiding a war. Alexios I disagreed on the partnership with the Cumans against the Pechenegs as he did not trust the ‘new Scyths’. He wanted to form an alliance with the Pechenegs by taking advantage of the humiliating defeat they had suffered at the hands of the Cumans. However, the work of Byzantine diplomacy ultimately proved ineffective because “the barbarians are slothful.”⁶⁶

Hostilities between Byzantium and the Pechenegs resumed in 1091, which afforded the Cumans the opportunity to get rid of their cumbersome enemies once and for all. Alexios I, aware of the imbalance of his forces on the battlefield in favor of his enemy, had no intention of facing the nomads. He knew he could take advantage of the Cuman offensive. According to Anna Komnene, their army showed up at the mouth of the Danube, ready for battle,

Miscellanies,” 459–65. Curta, *Eastern Europe in the Middle Ages*, 168. It is the first time that Anna uses Patzinaks.

64 Anna Comnena, *Alexiade*, II.VII, 105.

65 On the same opinion the old, but still valid Chalandon, *Essai sur le règne d'Alexis I Comnène*; Chalandon, *Histoire de la Première Croisade*. For a recent analysis see Madgearu, *Byzantine Military Organization*, 139–40 and Curta, *South-Eastern Europe*, 301–02.

66 Anna Comnena, *Alexiade* II.VII, 107.

with 40,000 men,⁶⁷ commanded by Tourgokan and Boniak.⁶⁸ This time, the emperor left "[the Cumans] full freedom to attack the Scyths."⁶⁹ These, for their part, secretly sought the alliance of the Cumans and the basileus but the Cumans had no intention of accepting such an offer. Their aim was to expel them from the steppe. Any form of alliance would have hindered that plan. The battle became inevitable and took place at the foot of Lebunian Hill. It turned out to be decisive for the entire makeup of the region – specifically between the low Volga in the North Caucasus to the Danube. The result of the battle was predictable, and "terrible was the massacre of the Scyths".⁷⁰

Thus, 1091 marked the ultimate defeat of the Pechenegs, who ended up assimilated, following the defeat, first by the Cumans, then by the Byzantine empire and finally by other neighboring peoples. The empire incorporated them several times into their own army.⁷¹ The following events relate to the Byzantine-Cuman wars, and again the empire used the nomads as auxiliary troops a few years after the rout of the Pechenegs. After alternating events, which were favorable for Byzantium, the zenith of the clash occurred when the Cuman army was fully integrated and led by the Pseudo Constantine Diogenes. The Byzantine generals tried to withstand the impact the best they could. Nicola Maurokatakalon "called the leaders of the auxiliary troops, Ouza, who was a Sarmatian, the Scythian Karatzas, and also the semi-barbaric

67 Ibid., II.VII, 136.

68 The Russian Primary Chronicle confirms the names of the Cuman leaders (RPC, 179 and 182): "Svyatopolk made peace with the Polovcians, and took to wife the daughter of their prince Turgokan". Further on, sa 6604 (1096): "At this time, Bonyak and his Polovcians appeared before Kiev on a Sunday evening, and while ravaging the environs, they burned the prince's palace at Berestovo".

69 Anna Comnena, *Alexiade* II.VII, 137.

70 Ibid., II. VII, 142.

71 "Of those people who live on the wagons, thousands fall [...] not a few prisoners were enlisted in the ranks of the Allies and most, assigned to the army, were sold as slaves" (Niceta Coniate, *Grandezza e Catastrofe* I: v.6, 41); Niceta Coniate, *Grandezza e Catastrofe* I: II, 4/5, 69–70: "The emperor, after having distinguished the troops, divided them by lineage and tribe, so that each tribe would help the other: he put the Macedonians in a single group, in another the Celts, in another the Scythians. [Emperor Michael v] then wanted to replace his personal retinue with young Scythian men he had bought some time ago [...] and part of them as bodyguards, part to assist him in any other of his desires" (Michele Psello, *Imperatori di Bisanzio*, I: v.15, 203). Also Choniates, on the occasion of the expedition of Isaac against the Bulgars in 1187, says that "the Mesians [...], after enlisting troops of Scythian mercenaries, raided the parts of Agatople" (Coniate, *Grandezza e Catastrofe*, I: III.1.1, 405). In Kinnamos: "Having chosen some of the Scythians who served in the Roman army, he sent them under the command of Gifardos, a very experienced soldier, on the trail of the enemy", John Kinnamos, *Epitome*, III.3, 76–78.

Monastras”.⁷² Just three years after the defeat (in 1094), the Pechenegs were partially absorbed into the ranks of the army, but still substantially alien to the social structure of the empire; as already mentioned, they served as auxiliary troops. They were no longer autonomous, and we can assume that losing autonomy placed the remnants of the population under imperial sovereignty, perhaps confined to border districts in the lower Danube area.

The war with the Cumans had favorable consequences for Byzantium because after the Greeks had captured the self-styled son of Romanos IV, the invaders suffered a severe blow and could not immediately unite.⁷³ Despite the victory, the empire did not manage to put an end to the Cuman threat. Indeed, they suffered defeat, and the re-appropriation of the war booty by the Byzantines forced the Cumans to retreat to the steppes of the northern Caucasus and to abandon expansionist ambitions beyond the Danube.

From the narrative of the Byzantine-Cuman war of the 1090s, one easily gathers that the daughter of Alexios I was full of indignation against “these barbarians, who were eager to get satiated with human blood, to stuff themselves with human flesh and to take a great deal of loot from our country”.⁷⁴

The Pechenegs also appear in John Komnenos’ campaign against Sozopolis in 1120–21. However, this time it was likely a union of tribes, including the Cumans – now close to asserting supremacy in this region – who, after crossing the Danube, invaded “the territories of the Romans”.⁷⁵ The Byzantines managed to defeat the invaders and once again many of the prisoners would be incorporated into the ranks of the army.⁷⁶

In Niketas Choniates’ *History*, there is a very interesting passage in which a Byzantine official accurately describes the Cuman way of fighting and the equipment they used. The incursion that the nomads carried out⁷⁷ on Byzantine territory in 1155 was particularly aggressive. The imperial army opposed the troops of Kálmán/Coloman, pretender to the Hungarian throne and fully supported by Byzantium.⁷⁸ The Cumans are depicted in this case as

⁷² Anna Comnena, *Alexiade* II.X, 204.

⁷³ Treadgold, *A History*, 619–20. Rasovskij, “Pechenegi,” 9–18; RPC, 180: “The Polovcians under the son of Diogenes attacked Greece, and devastated the Grecian territory. The Emperor captured the son of Diogene and had him blinded”.

⁷⁴ Anna Comnena, *Alexiade* II.VIII, 128–30; Kinnamos, *Epitome*, II.10, 56–57.

⁷⁵ Kinnamos, *Epitome*, I.3, 15–16.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, I.3, 15: “Because of the affection for those who had already been taken prisoner, and after having been trained in the use of the Romans, [the Scythians] served for a long time in the military ranks.”

⁷⁷ Coniate, *Grandezza e catastrofe* I: III.11/12, 215–16; for dates, see Otto of Freising, II, 53.

⁷⁸ Bibikov, *Vizantijskie istochniki*, 244–246; on the identification of Coloman see Niketas Choniates (*Grandezza e catastrofe* I, 582, n. 95).

bowed warriors, equipped with light armor. They sometimes use short javelins and make good use of horses.⁷⁹ They came armed with a waterproof leather pouch ‘full of mulch’ that they used to help them cross the river. and tried several times to break the Danube line.⁸⁰ The Byzantine Empire, for its part, could no longer extend its sovereignty beyond the river. The two forces remained specular until the Byzantine disaster of the Fourth Crusade.

Relations between the Kievan Rus’ and the Cumans were common starting with the early years of the latter’s appearance in the steppes. This could be one reason why the Russians are the only ones to use the ethnonym Polovcy.⁸¹ The Polovcy settled beyond the Dnepr, which constituted a natural barrier, a boundary between the two peoples. The river might have influenced the perception of ethnic diversity, and importantly the relationship between the Rus’ and the Polovcy should not be overlooked. Even more important is the fact that they did not develop only within the frame of a continuous state of war. They would likely have perceived one another as hostile, but not simply in a physical or violent way. They would have considered the divergent mentalities between them as perhaps a great source of division. Russian sources almost always cite the Polovcy as a disgrace, stressing their paganism. The Polovcians “maintain the customs of their ancestors in the shedding of blood and in glorifying themselves for such deeds, as well as in eating every dead or unclean thing [...]”. And further on “They marry their mothers-in-law and their sisters-in-law, and observe other usages of their ancestors.”⁸² They represented a “pagan calamity”,⁸³ the “malignant sons of Ishmael”.⁸⁴ Many events of the Kievan period show, however, that the relations between nomads, Polovcians, and Rus’ were more articulated.

79 The image of the nomad living on horses often recurs not only in Byzantine, but also in Russian and Latin sources. Niketas Choniates states, shortly further on, that the horse “provides him with food [...] and when mounted he gives vent to the beastly sexuality of the barbarian.” Coniate, *Grandezza e catastrofe*, 215.

80 Anna Comnena, *Alexiade*, 3.XIV, 177: “the Cumans had once again crossed the Danube [...] at the beginning of the eighth indiction, at the end of autumn, in the month of November”; Ibid., 3.XIV, 182: the Cumans broke the Danube *limes* again, but when the imperial army went to the place, they had already fled. Then the chase began, narrated in detail by Anna, according to whom “after a chase of three days and three nights [the imperial troops] returned to the autokrator without having obtained the result.”

81 The Russian sources often utilize the title of Khan (Kaqan) to indicate the Kievan princes, especially Vladimir e Jaroslav. The same succession system customary among the Russian elites, *Lestvichnaja sistema*, shows similarities with the Cuman and Pecheneg one. Golden, “Imperial Ideology”, 39; V.O. Ključevskij, *Sochinenija*; Gumilëv, *Drevnie Tjurki*.

82 *RPC*, 58.

83 Ibid., 149.

84 Ibid., 178.

The fall of the Khazar Khaganate favored the independence of the Volga Bulgars, who established commercial contacts throughout the region, especially with the Rus'. These relations were consistent and lasted right up until the Mongol conquest. Such solid economic ties contrasted with the concurrent political and military confrontation that was worsening between Russia and the Bulgars. It is worth noting that this situation underlined the role confessional difference played between the two states, ultimately showing that it contributed in equal measure to the conflict.⁸⁵ The ties between the Rus' and the nomads differed in nature and varied depending on certain chronological contexts. We have seen that as early as 898 the Ugrians arrived on the banks of the Dnepr just south of Kiev. In 915 the Pechenegs concluded a peace treaty with Prince Igor of Kiev (d. 945) on the Danube; the Pechenegs appeared again in alliance with the Rus' in 979, and again many more times during the tenth century. In the late eleventh century it was Vladimir I who successfully confronted the Pechenegs' raids.

The early incursions of the nomads, especially the Pechenegs, had destabilized the region, but their passage into the Southern Russian steppe territory lasted only a short period and led to the balance in the lower Danube basin. Relations between the Rus' and Pechenegs were mostly military in nature;⁸⁶ hostilities alternated with alliances. The establishment of the Qipchaqs/Polovcians, things changed, and the Turkic unions that settled between the lower Volga, the North Caucasus, and the north-central coast of the Black Sea more directly influenced the development of the Variangian-Slavic state.⁸⁷ It is equally true that relations between the Rus' and Polovcians went through dissimilar, sometimes overlapping, phases. A first period coincided with the earlier decades of Kievan Rus' history, until the early twelfth century, and a second period ended with the Mongol invasion.

The ethnonym Polovtsy appears for the first time in written Russian sources in the year 6406 (898). The author of the Russian Primary Chronicle (*Povest' vremennich let*) describes the allocation of the Magyars along the banks of the Dnepr. In the ninth century, the Polovcians had not yet arrived on the Russian steppes. However, the *Povest'* was written in the early twelfth century,

85 On the Volga Bulgars see Stepanov, *The Bulgars*; Dall'Aglia, "The Military Alliance," 29–54; Sullivan, "Khan Boris," 55–139; Todorov, "The value of empire," 312–26; Beševliev, *Die protobulgarische*; Halperin, *Russia and the Golden Horde*, in particular ch. 1; Grekov, "Volzhkia Bolgary," 3–37; Limonov, "Iz Istorij vostochnogo torgovli," 55–63; Noonan, "Suzdalia's Eastern Trade," 371–384. On the Second Bulgarian Empire see Madgearu, *The Asanids*.

86 Halperin, *The Golden Horde*, 13.

87 Skrzhinskaja, *Rus', Italija i Vizantija*, 78.

and its author used the ethnonym as a comparison. He claims that "the Magyars passed by Kiev over the hill now called *Hungarian*, and on arriving at the Dnieper, they pitched camp. They were nomads like the Polovcians".⁸⁸

The first raid by steppe nomads – including Polovcians – into Russian territory, is described, as we have seen, in the chronicles in 1054. In 1061 the *Povest'* notes a violent Polovcian foray against "the Russian land".⁸⁹ According to the chronicler, this was "the first calamity derived from pagans and godless enemies". The raids became more and more frequent: 1068, 1071, 1078, 1082, until the fateful 1092/93, when the Polovcians took three crucial settlements: Pesochev, Perevoloka and Priluk and several villages on both sides of the Dnepr.⁹⁰ This event is central to the first phase of Russian-Cuman relations. The conquest of cities represented the establishment of an important presidium for the Polovcians. It acted as a border that effectively placed them in front of the Russian principalities and in consistent contact with a sedentary model, at least partially strange even for them. It was a structured economy, based on agriculture. Moreover, the settlement of the nomadic groups on the banks of Dnepr inaugurated stable and inevitable relationships. From this moment on, Russian-Cuman relations materialized through political alliances and trade. Indeed, the author of the *Slovo* demonstrated that regular connections between them were confirmed through an accurate knowledge of the steppes.⁹¹

In the second period, Russian-Cuman relations are more rhapsodic: Russian princes carried out a spectacular alternation of alliances, wars, incursions, and agreements as a means to assert their sphere of influence over more extensive territories and prevail over their Russian rivals. If we follow the rhythm of events illustrated by the sources, we observe that alliances and ruptures are

88 *RPC*, 62.

89 *Ibid.*, 143: "The Polovcians invaded Rus' to make war for the first time".

90 *Ibid.*, 173–75.

91 Halperin, *Russia and the Golden Horde*, 16. The *Slovo o polku Igoreve* (Tale of Igor's Campaign) is an epic Russian poem that narrates the deeds of Prince Igor Svyatoslavich (*The Brave*) of Novgorod Seversk (d. 1201) engaged in recovering of the lands subtracted by the Polovcian advance. Written around 1185, it provoked a harsh debate (still lively) on its authenticity. The original manuscript was lost in the fire of Moscow in 1812. Recently, and thanks above all to the studies of the Russian linguist Andrej Zaliznjak (cf. Zaliznjak, "Slovo o polku Igoreve") we can say it is authentic and contemporary to the events it describes. The scholarship on the subject is copious; in English see the old but still excellent Magnus, *The Tale of the Armament of Igor* and Stender-Petersen, "The Igor Tale," 143–54. See also Chizhevskaja, *Glossary* and Mann, "The Silent Debate," 53–94.

constant in a setting that was incredibly precarious. Relations were never consistently friendly or overtly hostile.⁹²

The decentralization of power that occurred in Russia during the twelfth century was the cause and the effect of changes in relations with the Polovcians. The enmities between Russian princes required them to seek alliances in order to prevail over each other. It is also likely that the Polovcians had willingly avoided moving north to the forest regions. It was an environment that was alien to their given lifestyle. However, when they were called by the princes for purely political-military purposes, they took advantage of them to carry out raids. Apart from the first period, the Rus' were never a unitary state, but a set of principalities linked by parental relations and agreements that were seldom respected. The term Rus' has never designated an ethnicity, but a set of populations that moved, at least until the eleventh century, along the main trade routes of the Volga and Dnepr.⁹³ In the mid-eleventh century, Rus' power stretched over a vast territory, vaguely trapezoidal, between the Volga to the east, the mouth of the Don, and the Kievan region to the south, the territories bordering the Baltic Sea and the Neva course to the north. To the west, it reached the middle course of the West Dvina, the Neman and even to what is now present-day Hungary. The geographical extension was one factor that determined relations with the steppe nomads (see map 2.2).

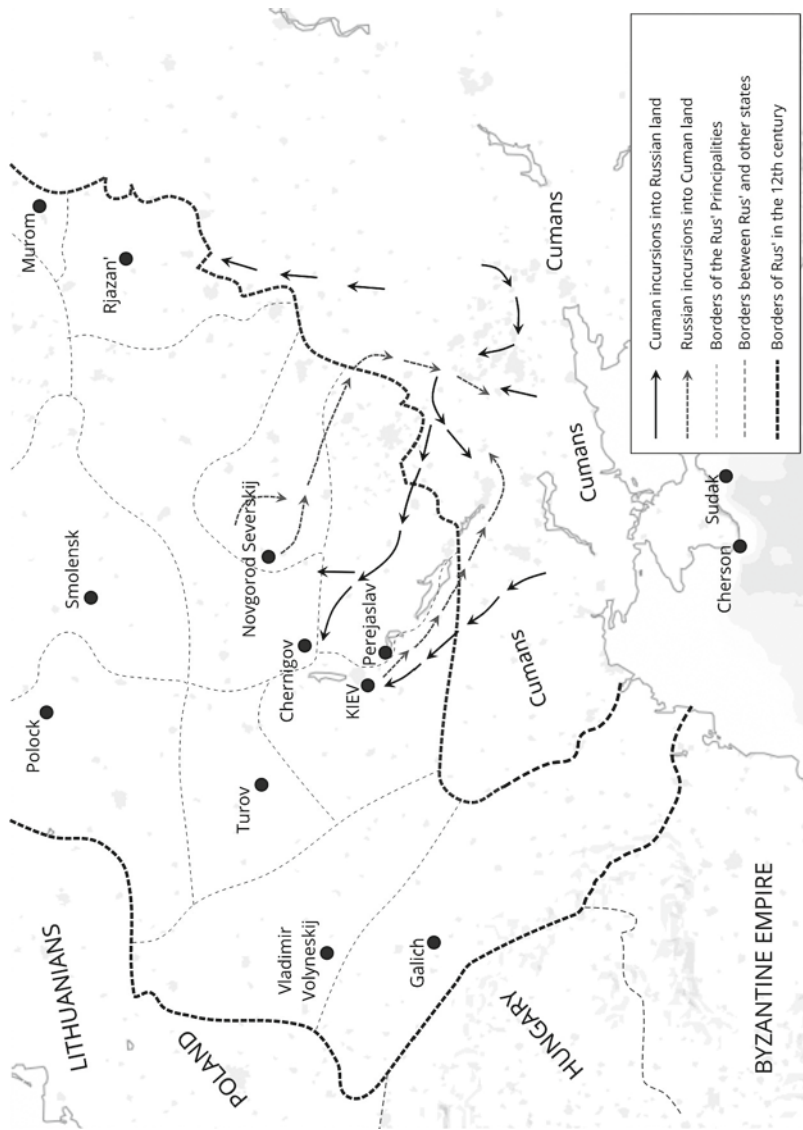
Periods of peace still saw the presence of the military, but also consisted of families. It is not uncommon to find in the written sources precise references to marriage sanctioned between Russian princes and women of the nomadic ruling class.⁹⁴ Nonetheless, accords were extremely precarious. Within a few months, they could change radically. The *Povest'* of 1095 for example showed that the Polovcians arrived in Jur'ev and remained there for about a year. Svyatopolk "chipped them back."⁹⁵ But in 1096, the enemies of Russia raided the region of Kiev, where they set fire to the prince's palace in Berestovo.

92 Golden, "The peoples of the south Russian steppes"; Id., "Imperial Ideology"; Halperin, *Russia and the Golden Horde*; Noonan, "Rus', Pechenegs, and Polovtsy," 301–27.

93 Golden, "The question of the Rus' Qaganate," 89–90 and especially the recent and voluminous work of Sverdlov already mentioned: a long and well-documented essay, the result of careful reflection, in which the legacy of Grekov's and Rybakov's studies is taken up again. See also the excellent synthesis by J. Martin, *Medieval Russia*.

94 In 1094 the Russian prince Svyatopolk concluded the peace with the Polovcians and takes the daughter of their chieftain Tugorkan as his wife (*RPC*, 179–80); in 1118 Vladimir Monomakh's son, Andrei, married Tugorkan's granddaughter (Zenkovskij and Zenkovskij, *The Nikonian Chronicle*, I, 242); in 1205, so in a somewhat advanced period, Vsevolod Jurevič marries his son Jaroslav to the granddaughter of the Cuman Qagan Konchak (Zenkovskij and Zenkovskij, *Nikonian Chronicle*, II, 228).

95 *RPC*, 181.



MAP 2.2 Cuman settlements in the northern Pontic steppes, 11th–12th century

On 19 July 1096, the Russians inflicted a severe defeat on the Polovcians over Trubezh. On that occasion, they killed the nomad chief Tugorkan.⁹⁶

From the 1140s, the labile relations between the Rus' with the nomads of the steppes saw a new alliance come into being when the Grand Prince signed a pact with the *Chernye Klobuki* (black hats/hoods). This union included Berendei, Torki, Pechenegs – at least the remnants of them – and other smaller groups, effectively demonstrating that a part of the Russian ruling class always tried to establish ties, often with anti-Polovcian overtones. The Kievan prince probably hoped to create a well-armed militia, aware of nomadic military strategies and accustomed to fighting in physically hostile territories such as the steppe, to be used when necessary, against the Polovcians in the middle of the twelfth century.

In an essay published a few years ago, Svetlana Pletněva⁹⁷ stated that the bond with those nomads resulted from an alliance, vassalage with Izjaslav Mstislavich (Prince of Kiev in those years), as shown by passage of the *Ipat'evskaya Letopis'*.⁹⁸ The *Chernye Klobuki* were now playing a decisive role in the political direction of Russia. It is worth mentioning some facts for context at this point: in 1147, Izjaslav Mstislavich, recruited soldiers from both the Smolensk, Novgorod', and from the Berendei to fight against the Olgovichs and Yuri Dolgorukiy.⁹⁹ The following year, Yuri -son of Vladimir Monomakh- decided to attack Izjaslav Mstislavich, but hesitated when confronted with forces composed of Russians and Berendei.¹⁰⁰ In 1167, Vladimir Mstislavich, uncle of Izjaslav, wanted to occupy the throne of Kiev that belonged to his nephew, but was driven out of the city by troops of Berendei.¹⁰¹ In 1185, Svyatoslav Vsevolodich sent Roman Nezdilolovich as governor of Poroz', to the stronghold of *Chernye Klobuki*, to lead them against the Polovcy.¹⁰² One could easily continue this list of events showing the systematic use – from the second half of the twelfth century on – by the Russian princes of this nomadic union, which was undergoing a kind of transformation in the direction of expanded territorial stability.¹⁰³

96 Ibid., 181–87.

97 Pletneva, *Polovcy*, 76.

98 PSRL, 323.

99 Zenkovskij and Zenkovskij, *Nikonian Chronicle*, II, 27–32.

100 Zenkovskij and Zenkovskij, *Nikonian Chronicle*, 38–39.

101 Ibid., 134–35.

102 PSRL, 556–57.

103 Under the label *Chernye Klobuki* was a very fluid ethnic mosaic. The dominant groups were Torki, Berendei and Pechenegs, but it is not excluded that there were Cumans incorporated during the numerous incursions and assimilated over time around Poroz'. See Golden, "Černii Klobouci," 97–107.

The consequences of the Cuman incursions into Russian territory were decidedly negative. However, they most likely differed from region to region and had a varied impact on the distinct levels of social structure. If the peasants greatly suffered from the devastation caused by the nomadic raids on the border between the steppe and the forest, the commercial relations between different entities occupying the territory between Don and Volga never ceased. The productive and trade potential of artisans and merchants most likely benefited from such trade. In any case, the Polovcian raids on Russian soil did not stop until the Mongol conquest.¹⁰⁴

The relationship of the Rus' with the steppe nomads is, therefore, a matter that requires extensive reflection. The study of the origins of Turkic nomads confirms that they settled in the region of the Eastern European steppe and requires a lot of care when being discussed. The written sources underline, as we have seen, many rapid incursions, mainly raids, as a means to procure abundant spoils. Such events occurred alternately with moments of peace, during which frequent and profitable commercial relations flourished.¹⁰⁵ From an ethnic point of view, the situation was no less fluid than it was political: we must not imagine the steppe nomads as unchangeable blocks, and opposed to each other in a kind of fratricidal war. Confrontations were not the result of collective identity or a sense of belonging. The Berendei, or *Chernye Klobuki* in general, did not attack the Polovcians because they were Polovcians, nor because they perceived them as hostile. It is almost impossible to imagine that there was such awareness at the time. The reasons were more practical and often were related to mere survival in an environment where various peoples had lived for centuries and had been able to adapt to it. In this sense, the steppe nomads show an organizational complexity that is not inferior to any urban civilization. The Russian princes sought the means on one hand to defend the borders of their principalities, and on the other, to expand it. Alliances with nomads was one means to achieve their goals. Between Russian princes and the nomads, there was often a mutual convergence of interests (during the first

¹⁰⁴ According to the Nikonian Chronicle, in 1211 there was a particularly violent incursion into the region of Kiev (Zenkovskij and Zenkovskij, *Nikonian Chronicle*, II, 245), but a few years earlier, in 1205, Jaroslav Vsevolodič married Konchak's niece. In the early thirteenth century, the Cumans were still a fearsome military force. According to Robert of Clari, "John of Wallachia [Kalojan] had these Cumans in his aid and he used to prey on the emperor's lands as far as almost Constantinople itself every year, nor did the emperor have sufficient strength to defend them"; Roberto di Clari, *La conquista di Costantinopoli* LXV, 196–97.

¹⁰⁵ Grekov and Jakubovskij, *L'Orda d'Oro*, 14–15; Bartold, *Turkestan*, 341–43 and 357–58.

Mongol incursion in the northern Caucasus, a part of the Russian aristocracy allied with the Polovcians to match the Chinggisid hordes).

In terms of the commercial, political and military interests of the region, we must refer to what we have already said: The Kievan Rus' were never a unitary state. The princes, intent on maintaining their possession and expanding them, when possible, based their relations with the nomads on this necessity. If they needed to, they would seek an alliance, otherwise they rejected them. The Polovcians, for their part, needed subsistence and men. The cities of *Gaardariki* (as the Scandinavians called Rus', because of the beauty and richness of its cities) represented a potential haul to draw on.

Ultimately, we can observe that these relations never stopped until the Mongol conquest, and as a result, changed trajectory. Some trading routes underwent readjustment, others inexorably declined, and the balance of power also changed. The Mongol conquest broke the Cuman territorial continuity and deprived them of their military and economic autonomy. It inflicted a demographic blow, but the conquerors never managed to establish themselves as a dominant ethnic group.

Kievan Rus' suffered a tremendous shock from the Mongol conquest, but by the time it occurred, the territory had already been in a state of crisis for some time. The decline was primarily economic; the center of gravity of trade relations moved south to Crimea, where the territorial unity achieved by the Mongol conquest – and the weakening of the Byzantine power caused by the fourth ruinous crusade – favored the expansion of the Western mercantile republics. The conduct of the Ulus Jochi's rulers, in constant need of resources, strengthened the commercial contacts between them and the new "emporia" established in Crimea by the Italians since, at least, the 1260s.

The Rus' did not disappear as a set of territorial states, but was placed, with different ways and times, under the Mongolian authority. It represented a dominion that was initially strict and direct, but soon became labile and distant. This was a political change, but soon joined by a disastrous economic decline that was already underway and that many frequent conflicts managed to worsen. On the other hand, the creation of a new state, with its officials, its administrative machine and bureaucratic apparatus, but not rooted in the territory as was the Golden Horde, allowed greater freedom of movement and a new network of political, cultural and economic relations to flourish.

Caucasia, Nomadism and Immigration

1 The Cimmerian Bosphorus between Byzantium and the Second Nomadic Wave

The Kerch Strait is located between the mountains and the vast Kuban plain in the present-day Caucasian region of Adyghea. Although the population consists mostly of Russians and Adyghe, there are still over eighty nationalities in the area, a faithful mirror of the ethnic complexity that characterizes every corner of the Caucasus. Written sources have presented the Adyghe as Circassian since the period of Greek colonial domination in the region. Hellenistic culture has long influenced the development of this area and has shaped its social, economic and political physiognomy since the fifth-century BC with its developed sedentary civilization, a productive structure focused on agriculture and densely populated cities. On the right bank of the Kuban, from the seventh to the sixth century BC, the written sources inform us that the Meotian civilization developed and gave its name to the Sea of Azov.¹ The union of the semi-nomadic tribes of the Zichians appeared in the first century and were destined to profoundly influence the progress of the region until Byzantine hegemony took place in the second half of the sixth century. When Byzantium and the Sassanids signed a peace treaty in 561 (one that ended the Persian-Byzantine wars) Justinian I maintained possessions on the northern coast of the Black Sea – besides political control over Iberia, and therefore also on Tbilisi – while simultaneously preserving 'Roman' unity.² During this time, the Eastern Roman Empire imposed a forced conversion

1 Lake Meozia, Meotide etc. According to Strabo, the Kerch Strait fits between the Cimmerian Bosphorus of the Greeks and Sindike. It combined the Pontus Euxinus (Black Sea) with the Meotide Marsh (Mar d'Azov). On the right bank (the Cimmerian Bosphorus) stood Pantikapaion, the Village of Ants, and Parthenion; Sindike was home to the cities of Korokondame, Hermonassa, Apatouron and, further south, Gorgippie. To the north of the strait is what the Greeks called Korokondamitis, a small island on which six important settlements had sprung up for navigation in that region: Satyros, Patrasys, Phanagoreia, Gardens, Tyrambe and the Achilles Sanctuary. The whole thing constituted the Taman Peninsula: Roller, *Geography*, XI, II, 2–11, pp. 478–479, and Herodote, *The stories*, edited by L. Annibaletto, Milan 1988 cit., lib. IV, XI and 50, 2015.

2 Bratianu, *La Mer Noire*, p. 120. In particular, the Byzantine empire maintained the Cimmerian Bosphorus with Pantikapaion and Cherson; the same political strategy was adopted in the west, in Dobrugia.

on the peoples of the Northwestern Caucasus by installing the diocese of Zichia. The advance and consolidation of the Khazars, between the eighth and ninth centuries, reached the Kerch Strait and enhanced the city of Matrega (Matrica or Matracha). From this position the Turkic Empire could control access to the Azov Sea, and therefore the transit of food from the Kuban plain, which was one of the major grain suppliers of the region.³

Trade contacts of the Khazar Empire with Central Asia and Northern Europe have always been very active. The discovery of Arab coins near the Volga and in the Baltic provinces has confirmed this, reinforcing scholarly belief that the Khazars played an important role as commercial intermediaries between Sassanid Persia and the North. The whole area around Kerch and the Taman Peninsula was rich in villages, according to al-Idrisi,⁴ and Matrega was located on the banks of the Kuban.⁵

The victory of the Rus' of Svyatoslav over the Khazars in the tenth century gave birth to a political imbalance, as a result of which, Zichia came under Byzantine sovereignty *over* the district of Tmutarakan through a complex series of alliances that were short-lived. In 971 Svyatoslav and Vladimir concluded a treaty that pacified the violent infighting between Russian princes. According to the Russian Primary Chronicle, Vladimir arrived in Tmutarakan in 988.⁶ In 1022 Mstislav "returned to Tmutarakan" and "founded a church dedicated to the Holy Virgin and built it, as it stands in Tmutarakan' even to the present day."⁷ Vladimir had recently converted to Byzantine Christianity, and the basileus, Basil II (d. 1025), took the opportunity to inflict the coup de grâce on the Khazars through the Slavic Christian prince. The Byzantine expedition organized in 1016 brought the expected results, and in the early eleventh century the Byzantine administrative structure of Zichia was active. Traces of it were discovered by Banescu and later confirmed by Bratianu's studies.⁸ The primary sources, from 1084 to 1094, mention a bishop of Kerch who depended on the patriarchy of Matrega and lived on the Taman Peninsula.⁹

3 In the eighth century there was a Khazar governor in Matrega, the *Tudhun*; Bratianu, *Recherches*, 32–34.

4 The information is confirmed by W. Rubruck (Rubruck, *The Mission*, 64 and n. 3).

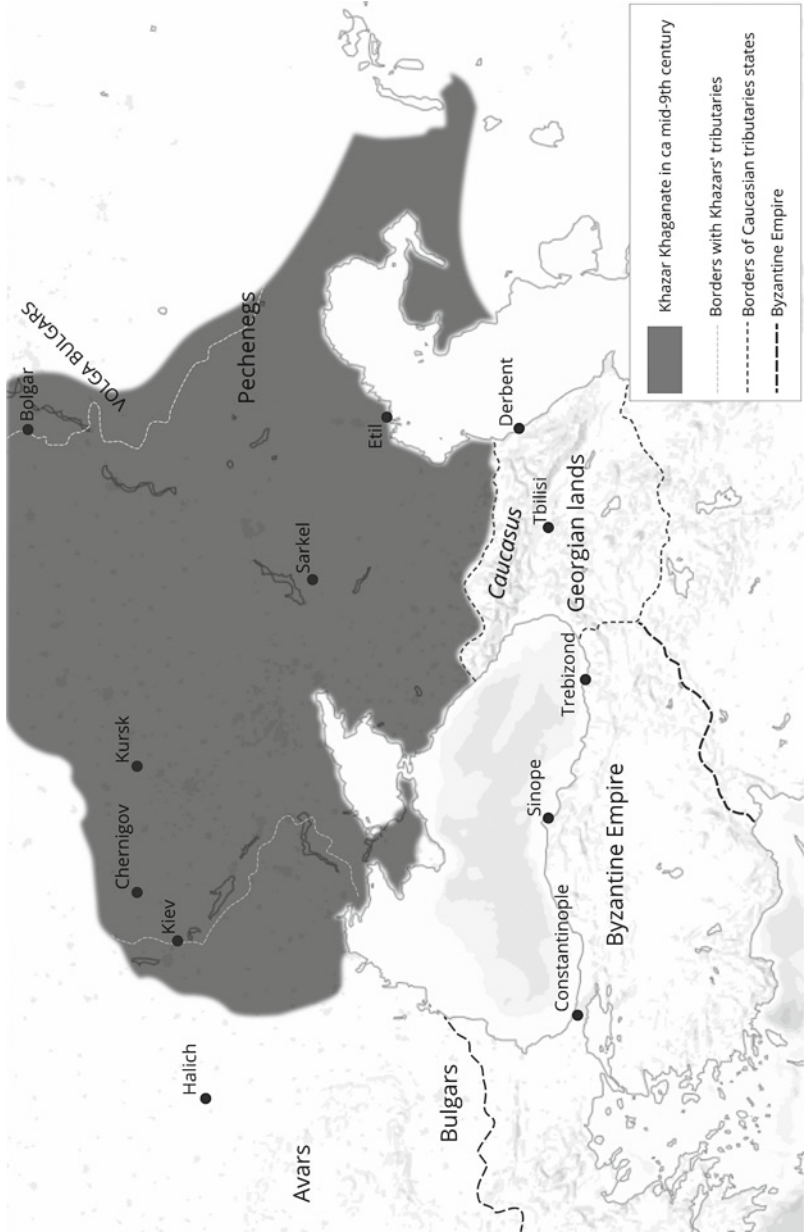
5 Precisely on an arm of Kuban, the same that Strabo called *Hyspanis* (Roller, *The Geography* XI.2, 483–85) and Idrisi *Sakir*. See also Heyd, *Storia del commercio*, p. 221.

6 *RPC*, 111–12; the Russian principality of Tmutorakan was established this year (Bratianu, *Recherches*, 36).

7 *RPC*, 134.

8 N. Banescu, *La domination byzantine*; Bratianu, *La Mer Noire*, 158; Gadlo, *K istorii Tmutorokanskogo*.

9 Golubovich, *Biblioteca bio-bibliografica* II, 558–60 and III, 58 and 216.



MAP 3.1 The Khazars and the Caucasus

In the tenth century, relations between the states in this region were frequent and well structured. Russian princes had established themselves as credible political interlocutors for both the Byzantine Empire and Latin Europe; Jaroslav's daughters even married the kings of France, Hungary, and Norway.¹⁰ Bratianu rightly claimed that Kiev and Novgorod' (Velikiy) became a sort of small Constantinople.¹¹ The Kerch Strait and the Bosphorus were composed of a complex web of established commercial relations and a vital center for the collection and sorting of commodities. It was a place where Russian, Byzantines, and Khazar merchants bought from the Pechenegs and Volga Bulgars nomads. Goods traveled north, to the Baltic region, or south to the Persian markets. The same happened in Asia Minor, where the city of Trebizond was developing into an important trade hub connecting Constantinople to the Caucasus. On the eve of the second nomadic wave, in the mid-eleventh century, the strip of territory from the Azov Sea to Armenia became part of a functional political and economic system whose relations with Central Asia were stable and profitable.

The second nomadic wave (discussed in chapter 1) brought westward Seljuk Turks and Cumans. The settlement in the steppes by the latter had a decisive impact in the region, and Turkic nomads gradually populated Tmutarakan. Throughout the eleventh century, the region came under duress due to Qipchaq pressure from the east and frequent infighting between Russian princes. In fact, the Byzantine influence was still robust in the twelfth century, as is clearly demonstrated by the example of Manuel Komnenos granting Genoa the right to settle in the empire's capital, though he forbade the Ligurian Republic the rights to trade in Rosia and Matracha.¹² After the Fourth Crusade, when the Latin Empire of Constantinople was at its apogee, many Latin merchants embarked for Constantinople and reached Matrega, whereupon they proceeded to the mouth of the Don. It is unlikely that they considered products from Asia.¹³ As mentioned previously, the political situation in Turkestan and Khorazm did not allow these connections in the passage between a first and a second nomadic wave. It was the Mongol conquest that ultimately brought a permanent change, integrating regional economic systems into a common space of exchanges. However, even after the conquest and the altered

10 Bratianu, *Recherches*, p. 37.

11 Ibid., 37–38.

12 As we have seen above (ch. 1), this is a controversial passage. However, it seems evident that the Byzantines didn't want any foreign ship to cross the Kerch Strait. The same ban was issued in 1198; Bratianu, *La Mer Noire*, 179. For a detailed picture of the region in this time see Bortoli and Kazanski, "Kherson and its region," 660–65; Mango, *Byzantine Trade*, 430–31.

13 Heyd, *Storia del commercio*, 312.

continental balance, the Kerch Strait and the settlements of Matrega and La Copa would maintain their importance in the region. It was an area rich in fish, the local people's primary sustenance even at the time of the Greek colonies. It is also worth mentioning the good quality and considerable quantities of grain that the lands of the strait could provide.¹⁴ Recent archaeological findings have finally shown that the manufacturers and the local industry did not lose their dynamic production even after the destruction of Kherson at the hands of the Mongols.¹⁵

2 Nomad Infiltrations into Georgia and Their Consequences

The Seljuk incursions, the politics of the Byzantine Empire, the stability of the Georgian kingdom, and the Mongol invasion, had an important precedent in the Khazar Empire. In the eighth century, the Khazar's hegemony in the strip of territory stretching from the Volga to the Caucasus was in the making. We should not overlook the importance of the nomad invasions before the Khazar affirmation (i.e., the Huns). Their contacts with sedentary civilizations were occasional, characterized mainly by destructive raids that produced devastating consequences in the region and particularly on small villages. An early phase of contrast led to relationships that became more structured and ultimately formed the personalities and character traits that are common to the people of the Georgian Caucasus.

2.1 *Peoples of Georgia and Social Organization*

In the first century, Strabo could observe that "Iberia is well populated, mainly by cities and villages; there are even terracotta roofs, and the houses are built according to the rules of architecture; there are squares and other public buildings."¹⁶ The Greek geographer could appreciate the sedentary organization and the excellent productivity of the soil, even though "most [of the Iberians] are belligerent and inhabit the mountain."¹⁷ Later, Strabo adds: "The Albanians, on the other hand, are more inclined to herding and, if we exclude the fact that

14 Old but still fundamental is Bratianu, "La question de l'approvisionnement," 83–107. The ban on the straits was part of the Byzantine protectionist and centralized economic policy. Until 1204, the state purchased big quantities of grain registering all the transactions. The empire put big efforts in food supply, way less in trade. This crack is the space where the Italian sea republics penetrated the Byzantine economic fabric.

15 Bortoli and Kazanski, "Kherson and its region," 663.

16 Roller, *The Geography* XI.III.1, 483.

17 Ibid. XI.III. 3, 483.

they are not wild, they come closer to the nomadic lineage: therefore they are moderately bellicose.”¹⁸

The terms used by Strabo such as wild, bellicose, nomadic, reveal the comments of a learned Greek man when confronted with peoples who were substantially unknown to him. However, in this passage, the Greek geographer made an intriguing point. The neat division between nomadic and sedentary sediments in the Caucasus – and particularly the Georgian area – was a fact and geographical distribution of the two organizational models even more so. The people of the Georgian territory were very adapted to its predominantly mountainous terrain and the contacts that occurred in the following centuries with the steppe nomads did not have the same effects that they produced on sedentary peoples. For the Iberians and the Albanians, nomadism was a more recent legacy.

The *sagwareulo* was the oldest known form of social organization.¹⁹ It was a clan, a nucleus like the Mongol *oboq*: a community of families with common ancestors. Each *sagwareulo*, divided into *gwari*, was under the authority of the elder, in Georgian *mamasakhlisi* (“father of the house”). Interestingly, herding was not the fundamental structural element of the clan – nor was it necessarily. The shared exploitation of resources was the basis of *gwari*, but such resources could be the product of agriculture. The redistribution of wealth was one of the primary forms of leveling wherein each clan, or family, or individual member of it, had his share. In fact, we can imagine that the economy of the Georgian communities of this period was poorly diversified, albeit not univocal. The Georgian society was constituted by groups that could vary in size and wealth. This model or set of models appears to still be strong in Strabo’s time. He writes: “The men who populate this land are classified into four groups: the first descends from kings, based on kinship and greater seniority (cadets, on the other hand, oversee justice and the army). The second is that of priests, who also deal with neighboring peoples. The third is that of soldiers and peasants, and the fourth is that of the ‘people’, that is, the royal slaves, who deal with all the needs of daily life.”²⁰ From these lines it emerges that the transmission of power was not patrilineal, but rather followed the criterion – very strong among the nomads – of pre-eminence: it could be the son, but also a brother or a cousin. The most senior member of the most influential *sagwareulo* (usually the largest and therefore the richest) dominated the entire Iberian tribal

18 Ibid. XI.IV.1, 484.

19 Allen, *A History of Georgian People*, 221.

20 Roller, *The Geography* XI.III.6, 484.

system, administering justice in peacetime and leading the army in war.²¹ Most of the people were free.

The immovable wealth belonged to the *gwari*, but only senior members managed it. Households existed independently of the clan, but it was natural to be a part of it and also necessary because it was much safer this way. The wars Iberia fought against Rome and the subsequent peace treaties increased contacts between two different models, and as a result Latin culture influenced Georgian society. This was especially true from the second century, when the succession system stabilized patrilinear turnover.²² A profound influence led to religious change. The introduction of Christianity to Iberia had ancient origins and was there even in the apostolic age when we see the first contact between the pagan world of the Caucasian peoples and the monotheistic religion.²³ The process that led to the affirmation of Christianity was long and complicated. In the fourth century it became the official religion of Armenia, Albania and Iberia.²⁴ The religious choice of the Caucasian states was of extraordinary importance because the emergence of Christianity gave a decisive impulse “to the formation of the national consciousness of Caucasian states, frontier lands even regarding Christianity.”²⁵

Since the fifth century growing social fragmentation dominated the Georgian regions, whereas differentiated and homogeneous groups with unequal rights and wealth gradually replaced clan-based organization. This disarticulation grew with the development of central power and the simultaneous refinement of the administrative machine. The imbalance was particularly accentuated between the eleventh and twelfth centuries, creating free, servile conditions and bringing greater distance within the ranks due to the wealth accumulated by providing armed services to aristocratic families or the sovereign himself. The process is similar to what had occurred in Latin Europe from the Carolingian era onwards. The so-called *Aznaurni*, for example, appear in Georgian sources precisely in these centuries as military nobility, prestigious officers in the sovereign's service; in return, they received lands and rights of the peasants who lived and worked there. By the dawn of the twelfth century, some of them had accumulated real fortunes and possessed fortified areas. Social mobility was modest, but it was not impossible to move up, primarily through service in the military. The mercantile class also emerges in these

21 Allen, *A History of Georgian People*, 223.

22 Ibid., 224.

23 “Then they sent a bishop named Yovhannes, two priests, three deacons, a cross, and an icon of the Sage”. Brosset, *Histoire* I, XI.

24 Braund, *Georgia in Antiquity*; Outtier, “La Christianisation du Caucase,” 553–68.

25 Bais, *Albania caucasica*, 103.

years and gains increasing importance with the development of international transit routes that crisscross the Caucasus and Armenia.

Beginning in the sixth century, Georgian territory underwent an administrative breakdown that progressively adjusted during the Bagratid kingdom. The rulers of the mighty dynasty could not break down the pre-existing system based on the local presence of the *Eristavni*, governors responsible for the administration of the provinces both from a military and civil point of view. Information of this office and its functions is scarce and fragmentary,²⁶ and so is the data on the administrative distribution of the kingdom before the eleventh century. As royal power grew and Bagrat III (circa 960–1014) ascended the throne, the strength of the *Eristavni* diminished as they posed a severe threat to the king and his potential for control over the territory. The *Eristavni* had a significant and well-organized following. They were responsible for military recruitment, administration of justice in villages, collection of annual tributes, and additionally had the power to impose new tributes. They were a powerful entity that clashed with Bagrat III's autocratic projects.²⁷ In fact, with the accession of Queen Tamar (circa 1160–1213) to the throne in 1184, the territorial division increased because of several factors: the increasing number of wars and victories, new lands to share, officers who received estates as reward for their military service and wealth that ended, increasingly copious, in the hands of a few families. These households proved that they were capable of administering the territory independently of the central power. Finally, the power and influence of the army grew. The increase in territorial property corresponded with the strengthening of the *patronqmobā*, a system in which landlords in the countryside (*tsikhis* or *midsis patroni*), or peasants who worked those lands (*qmani*) but did not own them.

At the same time, it also increased the protection of the countryside by centralizing its power structure, which hoped to exert greater control over the authority of the local owners. Tamar's reign represented a turning point: The Queen tied the ownership of the individual districts to the office that she exercised in loco. Thus, at the end of the mandate – which the sovereign could revoke at any time – the land returned to the Crown. The system did not always work and sometimes it could happen that the sovereign left the property to the ousted official. There is more information in the written sources regarding the administrative apparatus of the Georgian kingdom. It is enough here to remember that the officers of the kingdom were numerous and that in the thirteenth century, the bureaucratic machinery increased

²⁶ Allen, *A History of the Georgian People*, 238.

²⁷ Ibid., 243–49; for a detailed analysis see Charachidzé, *Introduction à l'étude*.

consistently and became more and more articulated.²⁸ It was in this context of political, cultural, and economic apogee that the Mongol raids hit Georgia.

The Mongol invasions of the Caucasus put an end to the independence of the Georgian kingdom.²⁹ The impact of the Chinggisid armies had tremendous consequences for Georgia and the minor Armenian centers of power because they were weak and sapped by Byzantine politics on the one hand and the geographical proximity of the Seljuk Sultanate on the other. To these two factors, however, we must add another, whose weight has not been highlighted enough by studies on the subject: the nomadic infiltration into the Georgian social fabric since the beginning of the twelfth century and its role regarding the evolution of regional civil units alongside political events. King David IV (*The Builder*, 1089–1125) personally invited the Cumans to Georgia for political reasons. However, they remained there for a long time and lived through a process of consistent assimilation whereby their influence on changes within the heterogeneous Georgian society was far from negligible. Both Latin merchants who, from the second half of the thirteenth century, frequented the Georgian ports of Batumi and Sevastopol, and the Mendicant orders who settled in this area permanently, had to deal with the consequences of this process.

2.2 *The Cumans in Georgia*

In 1118 David IV summoned a group of Cuman tribes led by the chieftain Äträk to come and live within the confines of the Georgian kingdom. The process that saw this nomadic contingent settle permanently in the structural context of a sedentary kingdom like that of Georgia was long and complex, but it had a destabilizing impact on the existing social and economic balances in the region. The reasons for David's initiative were diverse and still not clear. To understand the Georgian king's decision, we need to consider at least four factors: the incursions of the first Turkic nomads – the Seljuks above all – combined with the Byzantine policy regarding Asia Minor and the Caucasus, which fundamentally reduced Georgia's human potential; and as a result the kingdom suffered from a severe workforce shortage.³⁰ The second element – we have already considered in the first chapter – concerns the lack of a stable, central power. Disputes within the aristocracy over the influence of the sovereign's decisions worried David, who feared the nobles' growing sway at court. In any case, David's loyal army continued to grow and was a tool that only he could

28 Allen, *A History of the Georgian People*, 258–60.

29 See the thorough analysis in Vashalomidze, "Mongol invasions in the Caucasus," 309–20, and Pritula, "A Hymn on Tiflis," 217–38.

30 Golden, "Cumanica I," 59.

use. The Cumans were potentially dangerous neighbors for Georgia but were also a convenient buffer between the Caucasus and Russia.³¹ Placing them under formal protection could increase the control of the nomads. The fourth and perhaps most urgent reason David granted hospitality to the Cumans was the emergency in foreign affairs. In these years, Georgia was reasserting itself as a dominant political power and was trying to broaden its hegemony to those lands it had lost because of the Seljuk incursions. To implement this plan, David needed a well-prepared and robust army, all things that the exhausted Georgians could not, in these years, provide.

In 1118, over 200,000 individuals entered the Georgian borders (circa 40,000 were enlisted).³² They were mostly the clans who had settled in the steppes between the Donets, Don, and Volga; the so-called Black Cumania.³³ The nomads settled in the countryside and were granted land for grazing. The treasury paid a salary to those who served in the military.

David IV aimed to incorporate the nomads into the indigenous human tissue and to do so he tried to grant them pulverized lands: never large plots, but small portions within areas inhabited by Georgians or Armenians. In this way, he hoped to weaken their identity and accelerate the process of assimilation.³⁴ The next step would be the Christianization of newcomers.

If we take the limited figures we have to be true, we should wonder what happened to the 200,000 Cumans who entered Georgia. In the written sources it is clear that they had already disappeared by the second half of the twelfth century. This scenario begs the question, why is it that today in the Caucasus the toponyms and terms of Turkic origin are scarce? This question is of greater interest if we compare the Georgian experience with the Hungarian situation.³⁵ It is difficult to consider such a complete assimilation process. Most of the individuals who entered in 1118 are more than likely to have left early. After all, we know that the Äträk returned soon to the steppe.³⁶ This is a central problem for understanding the process of interaction between the two models. The minority that remained in Georgia may have forcibly settled because of the central

31 See on this Meschia and Cincadze, *Iz istoria* 7–9; Golden, “Cumanica I,” 60.

32 There is a general agreement of figures: Golden, “Cumanica I,” 62.

33 Golden, “Cumanica I,” 66; Golden, “The Polovcy Dikii,” 298 and n. 9; Pletněva, *Polovcy*, 71–77.

34 Golden, “Cumanica I,” 63.

35 Where traces of Cuman presence are visible still today in the vocabulary and toponomastic. See the works of N. Berend cited in the bibliography. On the Cumans in Romania see Rásonyi, *Contributions*; Diaconu, *Les Coumans*; Vasary, *Cumans and Tatars*; Spinei, *The Romanians* and Curta, *Southeastern Europe*.

36 Golden, “Cumanica I,” 65.

government's action and may even have had a confrontation with the rural population. It was not uncommon for nomads to become part of the ruling class of sedentary kingdoms because of alliances that resulted from marriage. From this point of view, the weak internal unity of nomadic cells and their consequent political disarticulation were a factor that fostered this diversified and sometimes contrasting relationship with sedentary realities.

In the past, the Georgian situation was considered emblematic but not only for the reasons listed above. In fact the partial, sometimes total, integration of the nomadic element within the local ruling class would often occur in later eras. Between the end of the eleventh and the mid-twelfth century, masses of Cumans settled in eastern Georgia (the Kartli area, on the border with Azerbaijan). It is likely that from 1118 the Georgian Crown allowed the Cumans to enter the flat area on the border with Azerbaijan, so they could spend the winter there without crossing the Caucasus mountains to return to the steppe. Whether this sizable nomadic group completely seceded or progressively abandoned the traditional model for the benefit of greater stability or a more diversified economy, is difficult to say. In favorable environmental conditions and within a changed social context, the process of sedentarization could have begun without insurmountable obstacles. On the other hand, when external conditions allow it, traditionally nomadic societies are not against more diverse productive models. In fact, the little information we have would suggest that these groups were increasingly resorting to agricultural production. We also see Cumans appearing in the administration of states close to the Georgian government in the second half of the twelfth century. The Azerbaijani atabeg Šams ad-Din Eldigüz was a Mamluk of Cuman origin – this assertion can be backed up by further evidence.³⁷ In this, as in all other cases where we find eminent people of Cuman origin who manage to climb into the high ranks of the administrative apparatus, we see that they never appear to support Cuman interests. Instead, they are local politicians or administrators (Georgians, Azerbaijani, etc.) with a Cuman ethnic matrix,³⁸ a clear sign of a re-identification process in the advanced stage of completion.

2.3 *Nomadism in Georgia: Contrast and Integration*

In the early twelfth century, Vladimir Monomakh's campaigns against the Cumans intensified, particularly those settled in the region between the Donets and the Volga. The pressure on the Turkic nomads became unsustainable.

37 Golden, "Cumanica I," 79; Bunijatov, *Gosudarstvo atabekov Azerbaidzhana* 44–52; Minorsky, *Studies in Caucasian History*, 93–96.

38 Golden, "Cumanica I," 81; Vásáry, *Cumans and Tatars*, 22–25.

This is perhaps another reason that led Ätrāk to accept David IV's proposal. After the death of the Slavic prince, the policy of the Rus' towards the Cumans changed decisively in favor of minor antagonism. The diminished pressure may have influenced the return to the steppe by some groups of those who had moved to Georgia (others, as is well known, settled in eastern Asia Minor, between Armenia and the Seljuk territories).

The absence of a coordinated model of power clashed with the indigenous sedentary element. Faced with groups that settled in the countryside adapting to the new semi-nomadic model, with very different times and ways from area to area, other groups of Cumans could not be controlled and even carried out raids in the countryside.³⁹ The group that arrived in Georgia was fragmented, so if a large number settled successfully in the rural areas (at least partially), others returned to the steppes as soon as they could. From the second half of the twelfth century and until the reign of Tamar, we find Turkic names within the local Georgian ruling class. The second or third generation of those Cumans who had settled in the plains of the Caucasian kingdom had sworn in governors, atabeg, or military officers. There were Cuman names even in the highest ranks of the court aristocracy. However, we must always remember the dual, fluid nature of the relations between the two realities. In the last thirty years of the twelfth century, the peculiar internal dynamics of the different social strata emerged. During the reigns of Demetrius I (circa 1093–1156) and, above all, George III, the contrasts between the Crown and the aristocracy escalated. The Georgian court aristocracy also had considerable properties in the rural suburbs. Most of the local governors came from the eminent families of Tbilisi, Kutaisi and Batumi. George III's policy of granting land based on the services rendered to the Crown rather than the lineage had undermined this privileged status. During the transition from the reign of George III to his daughter, Tamar (1184), the palace nobility attempted to downsize the power of the new Queen. In this circumstance, the ambiguous character of the social dynamics that led to the rise of elements of nomadic origin became evident. Qubasar, one of the officials loyal to the Crown, was forced to resign from his post due to pressure from the aristocracy led by Qutlu Arslan.⁴⁰ Both names, Qubasar and Qutlu Arslan are Cuman, and probably from the emigration of 1118. Two Cumans deployed on opposing sides after two generations and

39 Krader, *Formation of the State*; Krader, "Origins of the State," 77ff.; Pletnëva, *Pechenegi, Turki i polovcy*; Pritsak, *The Origin of Rus'*.

40 Golden, "Cumanica I," 79–80; Allen, *A History of the Georgian People*, 253–254. In this occasion, for example, Tamar took back Lori, only a part of the district where he was the governor. In this way Qubasar's family could own the land despite the removal of the high officer.

capable, at the end of the twelfth century, to represent a political alternative to that of the legitimate sovereign. Tamar did not give up on the aristocracy, and the history of her reign shows how she was able to react forcefully to external pressures (from this point of view, her success in foreign policy regarding the Georgian kingdom was brilliant).

Tamar's marriage is another event showing the dualism between the nomadic element and sedentarism. The Queen married Yuri, son of the Grand Prince of Vladimir Suzdal' Andrey Bogolyubsky (d. 1174), who was of Cuman descent.⁴¹ Nomadism, therefore, appears as only a partially antagonistic element. The relationship between the Qipchaq/Polovcians and the Rus' were very similar in the Caucasus, both within a framework of complex, differentiated and large-scale relations. In fact, we should not overlook the religious affinity between Kievan Rus' and Georgia. The Kievan prince Izjaslav II Mstislavich (d. 1154) married a Georgian woman, the daughter of Demetrius I (d. 1156), while Andrei's brother, Vsevolod, married a princess of As descent.⁴² Finally, during the first Mongol incursion into the Caucasus (see below Chapter 5), Cumans are in the armies of both Georgia and the Khorazm-Shah.⁴³

41 Andrei's father, Jurij Dolgorukij, had married the daughter of the Cuman chieftain Ay-opa (Golden, "Cumanica I," 82; Pritsak, "The Polovcians," 377; Allen, *A History of Georgian People*, 104–06). Tamar's marriage foundered early (1187) and without an heir to the throne of Georgia. Tamar married shortly afterwards (perhaps in 1189) David Soslan, a prince of the Bagratid dynasty.

42 Golden, "Cumanica I," 83.

43 Nasawi himself wrote that the Sultan's mother was of Cuman descent.

Building a People

1 The Early Altaic Peoples: Acquisitions and Open Issues

The origins of the Mongol-Turkic tribes are closely connected by their common experiences of fragmentation. Westerners perceived the Mongols as a widely homogeneous political and military entity from around the mid-thirteenth century. They were, instead, the outcome of an already advanced internal evolution. The history of these peoples involves many human aggregations, more or less large, but complex and diverse from each other. Unification was an evolutionary process begun decades earlier, and it remains difficult to identify the degrees of these changes for several reasons. Among others are the documentary scarcity, the typology of the written testimonies and their wide linguistic distribution, as well as the ideological conditions of part of the historiography that has dealt with Mongol studies. The steppe nomads have consistently been considered as an inevitably alternative productive and associative model, more often as antagonistic to the economic and social physiognomy of sedentary farming societies. More recent studies, benefiting from the contribution of the social sciences, have reassessed these categories.¹ From a historical point of view, and descending into ethnic individuality, we could cite for example the words of Edward G. Browne who, in a famous anthology of Persian literature, wrote about the differences that characterized the Arab and Tatar-Mongol invasions affirming that “in a word, the Tartars were cunning, ruthless and bloodthirsty marauders, while the Arabs were, as even their Spanish foes were ... and fain to admit, Knights [...] and gentlemen, albeit Moors.”² Browne’s book is still extraordinarily significant though his words, over eighty years later, imply a cliché that it is hard to dispel even today. The image of the evil Mongols, bloodthirsty, and carriers of destruction rather than bearers of an alternative structural society remains firmly rooted in the collective imaginary.³

1 In fact, the distance between historical and anthropological studies, as well as the lack of interaction between the two disciplines, are now largely mitigated. And on the other hand, a complex and chronologically lasting phenomenon such as nomadism should be studied from the widest possible perspective, using sources as well as field research.

2 Browne, *A History of Persian Literature*, p. 4.

3 Browne, *A Literary History* 2012 and Id., *A Literary History of Persia* 1999.

The analysis of the social dynamics within the early Altaic peoples and their original nomadic character are essential prerequisites towards understanding the birth of the Mongol Empire and, in particular, its westernmost realization (Ulus Jochi and Ilkhanate), which also involved the Caucasus.

The “Mongol prejudice” is above all perspectival: the written sources that elaborate on such prejudices are almost entirely the work of those who suffered their military impact and domination. There are exceptions – the case of *The Secret History of the Mongols* is emblematic – but many preconceptions remain.⁴ Partial exceptions can be found in the works of Rashid ad-Din⁵ and Ata Malik Juvaini.⁶ Nevertheless, both were the products of their authors’ need, that is, to please the Ilkhan who had commissioned the work.

It is of little use to re-discuss the violent character of the Mongol invasions. They indeed represented a sudden jolt, a bloody event, from China to Persia, from Turkestan to Russia; their sieges caused the death of hundreds of thousands, maybe millions, as entire communities underwent destruction. The Mongol conquests changed the economic and partly ethnic balance of an entire continent. However, it is worth stressing the lack of an “internal” perspective, and therefore the impossibility of examining the phenomenon in a framework of relative impartiality. The Mongol historical memory begins to take on a collective dimension only with *The Secret History*, an extraordinary and detailed document that goes back as early as the 1240s.

Given this premise, the only honest attempt we can make is a general reflection through accessible written sources. An initial problem concerns the early period of development of the Tatar-Mongol tribes, their social structure, and the specific context of the nomads’ experience in terms of both region and period. A second question concerns the dynamics that forced these peoples from the extreme eastern periphery of Asia to move in compact groups (or at least that is how they were perceived) to the West, subduing other peoples, conquering states and kingdoms until they became, even if for a short period, the largest empire that ever existed. A third issue is the understanding of the process through which these nomads developed into the creation of an empire; in other words, state formation.⁷ Regarding the conquests, the external consequences of these phenomena, the scholarship is vast and very good. Significant works have investigated and explained their genesis and

4 For whose edition we refer to Igor De Rachewiltz, see *Preface*, note 6.

5 For the editions of Rashid ad-Din’s text used see chapter 2, note 35.

6 For the editions of Juvaini’s text used see chapter 1, note 65.

7 About the scholarly debate on “State formation” or “Early State”, see Di Cosmo “State Formation”, 1–40.

fundamental characteristics. In the following pages, I will attempt to address these issues and propose some hypotheses. For example: What were the conquering methods in the region we are investigating? Did they really destroy everything in sight?⁸ What characteristics did their way of fighting bring, to the Caucasus, that would be perceived as new and impressive for their effectiveness? What were the forms and methods of dominion in the Caucasus and around the Azov basin?

Since the eighth century, the peoples inhabiting the Altaic region were a composite, ethnically differentiated universe. According to Juvaini,⁹ “The home of the Tatars [...]”¹⁰ is an immense valley, whose area is a journey of seven or eight months both in length and breadth. In the East it marches with the land of Khitai,¹¹ in the west with the country of the Uighurs, in the north with the Qirgiz¹² and the river Selengei, and in the south it with the Tangut and Tibetans.”

As mentioned above, while writing about the Cumans, the ethnonym used by the authors to refer to these peoples was a label, a simplistic classification that enclosed a set of distinct tribes whose origin would merit a single treatment for each one. However, if we want to investigate the impact of the Mongol progress in the Caucasus and the Pontic steppes, we should consider the situation of these peoples at the eve of the Mongol expansion and what elements played a role in bringing to life the unification of this vast and diverse tribal universe.

The environmental context within which the initial unifying processes took place was temperate, sometimes slightly warm in the summers, and was harsh in the winters. The mountain massifs in the region are numerous. The vegetation is sparse, and the soil does not provide adequate resources for sustenance. Steppe nomadism is a remarkable example of adapting to these extreme

8 Medieval warfare was profoundly different from what our visual memory is used to. A.A. Settia's, who wrote that “throughout the medieval age, in fact, by far the most widespread way of warfare consisted of devastating raids generally limited in time and space”; they constituted “at least 80% of the military episodes attested to by the written sources”: Settia, *Rapine, assedi, battaglie*, 4.

9 Juvaini I, 12–13.

10 Juvaini uses the generic ethnonym of Tartars, but he means all Mongols. Considering that he wrote in the 1250s and that he was an official of the Ilkhan, it is well clear why he is not precise.

11 Northern China – often referred to by the Western European sources as *Catai*, *Gattaio*, *Cattai* etc.

12 The Uighurs were, like the Kyrgyz, a Turkic people. The first were originally from present-day Mongolia, but were driven out of it by the Kyrgyz who, before this happened, inhabited the region of Upper Yenissei.

conditions. The adoption of nomadism as the predominant, albeit never exclusive, economical, and social model by these peoples resulted from a long and interlaced process. The possession of livestock became the essential source of livelihood even when environmental conditions allowed a modest use of agriculture. The concept of nomads dedicated only to breeding and gathering (especially hunting) and alien to agriculture should be reconsidered. There were communities that could not work the land as some areas of the region in question did not allow it, but the equation is not simple, and the two concepts should not be associated univocally. Some areas of present-day Mongolia, on the border with China and especially to the West, on the border with Kazakhstan, had modest fertility, so it would not be impossible to farm. Most of the soil's products flowed into nomadic societies by appropriation (exchange and raiding) and were one of the key elements in regulating relations with sedentary communities. In other words, the production systems of this region had more nuanced and less clear-cut characteristics.¹³

At the end of the twelfth century, the Orkhon valley nomads were almost unknown to Europe. They inhabited the region to the West and north of the Great Wall of China. China, for its part, had been dealing with them for centuries, but did not have a clear idea of these nomad peoples and considered them mainly as a threat.¹⁴ The area within which the earliest Altaic groups originated is vast: to the north is the Siberian region of Lake Baikal, to the south of India, to East China and to the West lies present-day Kazakhstan.

John Plano Carpini, who traveled this area in the mid-thirteenth century, writes that "the climate is incredibly variable. In fact, in midsummer, when the heat is strong in other places, violent thunderstorms with lightning occur, killing many people; there are also heavy snowfalls and violent storms of very cold winds in the same season, so much so that sometimes men can ride only with great difficulty."¹⁵ In his *History of the Nation of Archers* (ca. 1273),

13 For these aspects, especially for relations between Central Asian nomads and China, see N. Di Cosmo, "Ancient Inner Asian Nomads" 1092–26; Bold, *Mongolian Nomadic Society*, 25–32.

14 China often intervened to foment conflicts among the Central and Eastern Asian nomads with the primary aim of encouraging internal strifes within the tribes which, due to their size and military preparation, constituted a potential danger. In this regard the case of the Tatars is emblematic; see Barfield, *The Perilous Frontier*, 31–35; Grousset, *L'empire des steppes*, 243–45; Bartold, *Turkestan*, 381–82. The most complete and updated monograph on the relations between China and steppe nomadism is Di Cosmo, *Ancient China*, especially pp. 13–91; see also the already cited Di Cosmo, *Ancient Asian Nomads*.

15 Giovanni di Plano del Carpine, *Storia dei Mongoli*, 339. This excellent edition contains both the Latin text (from now on *Historia Mongalorum*) and the Italian translation (from now on *Storia dei Mongoli*). The text of Plano Carpini is well known to medievalists, not



MAP 4.1 The Orkhon Valley in the 12th century

the Armenian monk Grigor of Akner states that “as we heard from some of them, this [Mongol] people arose from their land of Turkestan and moved to some area to the east, dwelling there in extreme poverty for a long time as robbers and wild men”.¹⁶ The Armenian general Hayton, at the beginning of the 14th century, states that “The land where the Tartars first lived is located on the far side of the great Belgean Mountain [Burqan Qaldun], mentioned in the *Historie* of Alexander. The Tartars lived in that province like brute beasts, possessing neither writing nor [a religious] faith. They tended flocks of animals and moved from place to place searching for fodder for their herds. They were unskilled in arms, scorned by, and tributary to, everyone. Formerly there were many Tartar peoples, commonly known as Moghols.”¹⁷

The Chinggisid Mongols are descendants of an ancient tribe composed of Mongol and Tungusic peoples: the She-wei mentioned in the Liao Annals (tenth century). Among the Mongol subgroups that were part of the She-wei tribe were the Meng-wu, from which the Mongol ethnonym probably derives.

By the end of the twelfth century, extraordinary political and cultural fragmentation dominated Eastern Europe and Asia. Anatolia was under the power of the Seljuk Sultanate. In the eastern part of the Black Sea basin, the Fourth Crusade was about to provoke political turmoil. Alexios Komnenos was in

only specialists in Mongol History. It was written in two different versions, the first at the end of the journey in the emotional wake of his extraordinary experience, the second later, in order to make credible his journey. In the second edition Giovanni added a chapter, the IX, as well described by M. Cristiana Lungarotti in her essay (pp. 79–92). The *Historia* has had several editions, with translations sometimes incomplete, but generally the scientific level is very high. We recall here the main editions. Next to the fundamental version given by Van den Wyngaert, *Fr. Johannes de Plano Carpini* 1929; we can remember the first real attempt to translate and comment on the work already in 1838: D’Avezac, *Relation des Mongols*. It is worth it to recall the edition of Giorgio Pullè, *Historia Mongalorum* 1913. Another valuable translation is Becquet – Hambis, *Jean de Plan Carpin* 1965. The reference edition today is the one mentioned at the beginning published by CISAM with the Latin edition edited by Enrico Menestò. See also Pubblici, “John Plano Carpini”, 38–49.

16 Grigor of Akner, 2; Blake-Frye, “The History of the Nation of Archers”, 289. The “paternity” of this text has long been debated. Today, Scholars agree that the author was Grigor, a monk originally from Akner, in Lesser Armenia (Cilicia) who used the Annals of vardapet Vanakan (lost) for his *History*. See on this Dashdondog, *The Mongols and the Armenians*, 16–17. For the editions and the debate around the text, see Blake, Frye and Woodman, “History of the Nation of Archers”, 400–44; repr. Cambridge (MA) 1954. Here I have used both the editions published in 1949 on the *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* (13/3.4, pp. 269–399) and the one provided by the Armenist Robert Bedrosian (from now on “Grigor of Akner”), available online: Grigor of Akner, *History of the Nation of Archers*. <http://www.attalus.org/armenian/gatoc.html> (05.28.2021).

17 Hayton l’Armeno, *La Storia dei Tartari*, 311; Bedrosian, *Hethum*, 111.16 (<http://www.attalus.org/armenian/hetum3.htm>).

the process of building the Empire of Trebizond, with the military aid of the Kingdom of Georgia. The latter -a Christian power in a region where Islam was majoritarian- dominated the Caucasus. Beyond the natural frontier of the mountain range lived the Cumans, a nomadic people who comprised a majority within a complex ethnic universe. Transoxiana and part of Iran were under the power of Khorazm, of Turkic origin, which was Muslim and culturally influenced by the Arab-Persian tradition. The Abbasid Caliphate of Baghdad was a prop for Islam in Southern Caucasia, but in East Asia, the home region of the earliest Altaic groups, the political situation was more complicated. Mongol peoples inhabited Qara-Khitai, which lay between the Issyk-Kul and Tchu and Khagaria regions but was culturally Chinese. China consisted of three main areas: in the north, the Tungusic kingdom of the Kin (Chin). To the south was the strong Sung Empire, whose capital was Hang-Tche Ou, while to the north-west, between the Ordos and Kan-Sou, was the Tangut kingdom of Si-Hia.¹⁸

Beyond the Altai Mountains, in the areas between the Siberian steppes and the Gobi Desert, there was an authentic ethnic melting pot comprising nomadic tribes of Altaic origin, namely Mongol, Turkic, and Tungusic. Among them were the *Naiman*,¹⁹ who were Mongol Turks that settled between the Irtysh and the springs of Yenissei in present-day northwestern Mongolia. The cultural influence of the Naimans on the Mongol union was relevant because, apart from the quantitative aspect, they knew scripture. Vladimir Bartold himself stated that the first Mongol trade transactions of which we have written evidence are in the Uighur language and appear after 1206,²⁰ after the Mongols of Chinggis Khan had defeated the Naimans. The Mongols had no written language before this unification.²¹

18 See Grousset, *L'empire des steppes*, 243–44; Bartold, *Turkestan*, 381; Di Cosmo, “Ancient China”. 206–53.

19 “The Naiman people are boastful, bragging that they possess a great country and a large population”; *The Secret History of the Mongols* VII.190, 106 (from now on, SSM); see also Bold, *Mongolian Nomadic Society*, 56 and 82. *Naiman* is a Mongol name (*naiman* = eight); on this, see Pelliot, *La Haute Asie*, 28; Grousset, *L'Empire des steppes*, 244. The *Secret History* mentions the name Tayang, Khan of the Naimans (from *ta-wang*, in Chinese “Great King”: Grousset, *L'empire des steppes*, 244). The first mention is in a passage of the *Secret History*, where Jamuka, sworn brother of Temüjin (see *infra*), says: “My sworn friend Temüjin has messengers sent with secret communications to Tayang Qan of the Naiman”. SSM v.166, 79.

20 Bartold, *Turkestan* cit., p. 387.

21 Juvaini I, p. 25: “[...] since the Tatar peoples had no script of their own, he gave orders that the Mogol children should learn writing from the Uighur; and that these *yasas* and ordinances should be written down on rolls”. Bar Hebraeus also states that: “Since the Mongols had no writing of their own, Chinggis Khan had instructed the Tatar children in Uighuric writing. Therefore, Mongolian is written in Uighuric letters as the Egyptians

Besides, the Naimans had come into contact with Nestorianism and had assimilated some of its practices; nevertheless, they had not lost the shamanist tradition related to their nomadic origins. For example, after killing the Van-khan, leader of the Karaits recently defeated by the Chinggisids, the Naimans practiced special propitiatory rituals on his body. The mother of the Naiman khan ordered her head to be brought to her: She “placed it on a large white felt rug. She had her daughters-in-law perform the rites pertaining to a daughter-in-law, ordered that the ceremonial wine be drunk and the horse fiddle be played, and, holding the cup, made an offering to the head”. This rite would end with the sinister omen of the defeat that the Naimans would soon suffer at the hands of the Chinggisid Mongols of the young Temüjin.²² Therefore, it seems that their new religious identity was not strong, and that their traditional ways still dominated their most frequent rituals.²³ When the Khorazm-Shah began the march towards the Caucasus, the Mongols and the Naimans reacted;²⁴ particularly on the occasion of the occupation by the Sultan of Bukhara, from whence he advanced to Samarkand. The city fell to Muhammad, and the clash became inevitable. Between the end of August and the beginning of September 1210 (607 Hijri), the two armies battled on the Ilamish Plain.²⁵

Among the nomads mentioned in *The Secret History* that became part of the Chinggisid union were the *Merkits*, who settled in the region south of Lake Baikal.²⁶ In the written sources, they are often distinguished and appear as different tribes, albeit united. The *Kheraits* were, along with the Naimans, the largest and militarily most fearsome tribe in the region on the eve of Mongol unification. They lived along the Selenga²⁷ river and had been heavily influenced

do with the Greeks, and the Persians do with the Arabs”. Bar Hebraeus was born to a Jewish family in Melitene, on the Euphrates, around 1225. His studies had given him a broad linguistic education. He became a Monophysite Christian at the age of 17 and was ordained Bishop of his hometown around 1246. He was later Bishop of Aleppo and Sis, in Cilicia. This formation makes him one of the most credible contemporary observers and his work is full of interesting details. There are several editions of the work of Bar Hebraeus. See Grigorijs Bar Hebraus, *Chronicon Syriacum*, 411; see also Spuler, *History of the Mongols*, 39–40; Bar Hebraeus, *The Chronography*; Conrad, “On the Arabic Chronicle of Bar Hebraeus,” 320–78.

22 SSM VII.189, 104.

23 See on this Humphrey and Hürelbaatar, “Regret as a Political Intervention,” 3–45.

24 For the succession of events, see Juvaini II, 341–48; on the political evolution in Eastern Turkestan it is still today fundamental Bartold’s monography.

25 Juvaini II, 344: “[the two armies] came face to face and opposed their ranks one to another on a Friday in Rabi’ I, 607” (August–September 1210). See also chapter X, II part, 341–48.

26 Grousset, *L’empire des steppes*, 246; Pelliot, “A propos des Coumans,” 145; SSM II.102, 30–31.

27 See Grousset, *L’empire des steppes*, 245–246; Pelliot, *L’Haute Asie* cit., p. 25.

by Nestorianism. Unlike the Naimans, the Kheraits were converted since the beginning of the eleventh century.²⁸ The Mongols of Temüjin defeated them in 1203.²⁹ The future Chinggis Khan engaged in the most significant effort to subdue the *Tatars*. They lived between the lower Kerulen course and the Gobi Desert in present-day eastern Mongolia.

The Tatars were Mongols or “apparently Mongolian-speaking”.³⁰ Tatar tribes already appear in the Turkic inscriptions of the eighth century Kocho Tsa’ dam, “the era during which perhaps they already inhabit the Lower Kerulen region”.³¹ The rarefaction of written sources does not allow precise acquisitions, but it is probable that at this time, the overlapping of the boundaries between the grazing lands used by the different tribes affected the relationships between them. At the end of the twelfth century, the Mongols imposed their authority on other groups which had the effect of creating more areas of influence. The Tatars were, for decades, one of the main obstacles to Mongol ascent.³² The written sources attribute negative qualities to them and also considered them to be the main enemy.³³

Chinggis Khan unified the ethnic mosaic represented by these tribes, but it is difficult to establish whether, on the eve of unification, they were distinct groups or had produced some kind of resocialization processes by constituting new and larger groups. We know some aspects of the relations between the

28 Bar Hebraeus in Spuler, *History of the Mongols* cit., pp. 39–40; Richard, “Le Christianisme,” 101–24.

29 Bartold, *Turkestan*, 382. The *Secret History* narrates in details the Mongol-Kheraitid war; SSM VI, 87–88.

30 Grousset, *L'empire des steppes*, 246; Di Cosmo, *Ancient China*, in particular chap. VII, 255–93.

31 Grousset, *L'empire des steppes*, 246–47, and especially Tishin and Nanzatov, “Tataray vnu-trennej Azii,” 15.

32 The clash with the Tatars is narrated in SSM V.148–69, 67–83.

33 SSM IV.133, 53: “Činggis Qa’an said, ‘From old days, the Tatar people have been our mortal enemies, the people who have destroyed our fathers and forefathers. Now, taking this opportunity, let us jointly attack them!’ [...] then, asking for help to the tribe of Čürkin, the Mongol leader says: Let us jointly attack the Tatars who have destroyed our fathers and forefathers.” Further, in SSM V.153, 72: “They fought at Dalan Nemürge and drove off the Tatars. After they had overcome them, they forced them to rejoin [the Tatar] tribe on the Ulqui Šilügel it River and thoroughly plundered them. There and then they destroyed these important people: the Ča’an Tatar, Alči Tatar, Duta’ut Tatar and Aruqai Tatar”. And later on, having to decide what to do about the captured Tatar leaders, the generals of Chinggis Khan said: “From olden days the Tatar people Have destroyed our fathers and forefathers; / To avenge our fathers and forefathers, / And requite the wrong, for them / We shall measure the Tatars against the linchpin / of a cart, / And kill them to the last one, / We shall utterly slay them. / Only those taller than the linchpin would be killed. / The rest we shall enslave: / Some here, some there, dividing them among / ourselves!”

different tribes thanks to the *Secret History*, but there are many more opaque areas of this proto-Mongol stage. The picture we can better study – the one determined by the conquests – is also the product of these peoples' earliest activities. It is the outcome of the sum of all these fragmented realities, their unification, and their interaction with the subjected communities.

2 Ethnogenesis and Nomadism: The Earliest Mutations

The totality of the Turco-Mongol peoples before the unification was structured on a predominantly nomadic economy, although we do not know exactly which stage of development each of them was going through individually. Between the second half of the twelfth century and the first half of the following, they changed their social structure to increase stability in their territory and developed an economy characterized by greater individual exploitation of resources.³⁴ This was especially the case at the turn of the conquests that, beginning with Chinggis Khan, continued uninterrupted until the last decades of the thirteenth century. These populations settled in areas close to each other, going through a slow process of unification whose consequences reverberated all over Eurasia. Departing from East Asia, the Mongols reached Western Europe's gates, founding what Eastern written sources call Ulus Jochi or the Blue Horde and what the later historiography called the Golden Horde.³⁵

The investigation into the social, political, and economic aspects of the evolutionary process that led to the formation of the empire has attracted the interests of the scholars in the latest decades.³⁶ In Russia, rigorous studies began as early as the nineteenth century, but the research produced was often heavily influenced by the events that ideologically characterized the country until the completion of the Revolution in 1917. Historians in Mongolia have also put a lot of effort into the study of traditional Mongolian society. Fortunately, some of the best written contributions are translated into Russian

34 There is no need to return here to the fact that nomadism has never been a rigidly autarkic economic model. Anatoly Khazanov has amply demonstrated that if the nomadic economy has strong monovalence and modest recourse to the most advanced technology, it has always dialogued with sedentary communities in which the re-sources were more differentiated and so were the sectors of production. See Khazanov, *Nomads and the outside World* cit; Di Cosmo, *Ancient Asian Nomads* cit., pp. 1092–1126.

35 See on this Halperin, *The Tatar Yoke*; Id., "Omissions," 131–44; Pubblici, "Rus'/Russia," 302, n. 8.

36 See Claessen and Skalnik, *The Early State* and Claessen and Skalnik, *The Study of the State*; Claessen and Van de Velede, *Early state dynamics*; Di Cosmo, "State Formation".

and, more recently, into English.³⁷ Efforts to understand early Mongolian society greatly advanced in the first half of the twentieth century and culminated in 1934 when the academic Boris J. Vladimircov published his results in a long and well-learned work.³⁸ Vladimircov's conclusions came partially from a strictly materialist way of thinking, while simultaneously remaining anchored in Marxism. It is precisely for this reason, however, that the work has value and arouses a greater interest today than Soviet scholars recognized until the 1980s.³⁹ In any case, Vladimircov's book remains essential for any investigation of Mongolian society before the conquests of Chinggis Khan. Russian historiography on the Mongols has also "suffered" from the Eurasianist movement: a topic of lively debate since the second half of the nineteenth century regarding the eternal dilemma of Russia/Europe or Russia/Asia. This movement, which had among its most distinguished exponents G. Vernadsky,⁴⁰ insisted on the fundamentally positive character of the Mongol intervention on Russian history, rejecting the concept of Tatar yoke. Therefore, *Eurasianists* have looked at the steppe peoples critically, without only stereotyping them into the destructive warrior category.⁴¹ It is no coincidence that Bolshevism harshly persecuted the movement albeit the *Eurasianists* themselves had a fickle attitude towards the Soviet Regime.⁴²

To understand the dynamics of the Mongol conquests, from Asia to Europe, and to better analyze the organization of the territories they subjected from the Caucasus to the Sea of Azov, I think it is necessary to go into detail within the social structure of the Turco-Mongol peoples on the eve of the unification carried out by Chinggis Khan and to determine their intrinsic characteristics concerning their subsequent changes.

37 Ishjamc, *Istorija Mongol'skoj Narodnoj* and the new edition of 1964; S. Nacagdorj, *Iz istorii aratskogo dvizenija vo vneshnej mongolij*, Moskva 1958; S. Jagchid-P. Hyer, *Mongolia's culture and society*, Boulder (CO) 1979; N. Jagvaral, *Aratstvo i aratskoe chozjaistvo*, Ulambaatar 1974; C. Dalai, *Mongolija XIII–XIV vv.*, Moskva 1983.

38 V.Ja. Vladimircov, *Obščestvennyj stroj mongolov*, Moskva-Leningrad 1934. The book was translated to French with the title *Le régime social des Mongols. Le féodalisme nomade*, Paris 1948. Vladimircov was a linguist, nevertheless his work remains one of the best studies on the Mongol traditional society.

39 The most remarkable Russian monograph of the Soviet times on the Golden Horde and translated into foreign languages – Grekov- Jakubovskij, *L'Orda d'Oro* – still persist in the regressive effects of the Mongol conquest (see for example pp. 22–23). For a recent reflection on the concept of yoke see Pubblici, "Rus'/Russia."

40 For instance Vernadsky, *The Mongols and Russia*; Id., *Kievan Russia*; Id., "The scape and content." On Vernadsky and Eurasianism, see Halperin, "George Vernadsky."

41 Ferrari, *La foresta e la steppa*; Risaliti, "Sull'Eurasia e dintorni," 98–104.

42 Pubblici, "Srednii mir," 120; Id., "Rus'/Russia," 315.

Steppe nomadism has introduced some substantial novelties in redetermining the appearance of what anthropologists call *egalitarian* society.⁴³ The transformation of the collective economic foundations, which took place around the second millennium BC, forms the basis of the configuration that took place during the dominance of Chinggis Khan and the Mongols.

The social context of the nomadic tribes, on the eve of the Chinggisid unification, was based on the patrilineal agnatic clan, the *oboq* or *oboh*.⁴⁴ Exogamy was frequent⁴⁵ and the principal vehicle through which clans formed alliances. Polygamy was regular, but there was a strict hierarchy of wives.⁴⁶ Juvaini says that “according to the customs of the Mongols the rank of the children of one father is in proportion to that of their mothers, so that the child of an elder wife is accorded greater preference and precedence”.⁴⁷ The Persian historian adds that “if works be afoot in which a man has his share of forced labour (*bīgār*), and if the man himself be absent, his wife goes forth in person and performs that duty in his stead.”⁴⁸ The Flemish Franciscan missionary William of Rubruck, envoy of Louis IX of France to the Mongols in 1253, wrote that, in organizing the camp (*ordo*, which literally means *palace-tent*⁴⁹), the first wife had precedence over the others in the arrangement of his *ger*, the tent placed on the wagons.⁵⁰ The *oboq* lived on a *ulus*,⁵¹ an abstractly delimited territory that constituted the spatial area within which it exercised its traditional

43 Tosi, “Dalla tribù all'impero,” 269; Khazanov, *Nomads* in particular ch. 3, 119–96.

44 Bold, *Mongolian nomadic Society*, 79–80; Vladimircov, *Le régime social*, 56–73; SSM 1.9, 28; RaD 1, 148.

45 SSM 1.53, 9: “Ambaqai Qa'an gave his daughter as wife to the Ayiri'ut Buiru'ut Tatars who were living on the Urši'un River, between Lake Buyur and Lake Kölen”; SSM 1.61, 12: “When Temüjin was nine years old, Yisügei Ba'atur set out to go to the Olqunu'ut people, relatives of Mother Hö'elün, taking Temuujin with him and saying, ‘I shall ask his maternal uncles for a girl in marriage for him.’”

46 Narrating the origin of Temüjin, the *Secret History* emphasizes the prominent role of the first wife: Temüjin was the son of Yesügai-Bagatur and his first wife (SSM 1.59, 65).

47 Juvaini 1, 40.

48 Ibid., 1, 31.

49 Atwood, *Encyclopedia*, 426.

50 Guillelmus de Rubruc, *Itinerarium* 11.4, 21–22: “Et quando deponunt domus, prima uxor deponit suam curiam in capite occidentali, et postea alie secundum ordinem suum ita quod ultima uxor erit in capite orientali [...]” and William of Rubruck, *The Mission*, 74: “When they unload the dwellings, the chief wife pitches her residence at the western most end, and the others follow according to rank, so that the last wife will be at the eastern end: there is a space of a stone's throw between the residence of one lady and the next”. The structure and the function of the *ordo* is object of investigation by specialists today. See, for an exhaustive study, De Nicola, *Women in Mongol Iran*.

51 SSM 11.73, 70, 82 and 96; III.139, 90, 110 and 106; V.151, 123, 133–134 and 166.

grazing, hunting, fishing, etc.⁵² rights. The nomadic nature of the Mongol economy led to the conception of *ulus* not so much as a spatial entity as much as a demographic one. The Mongol *ulus* were the individuals and the households living on a given territory rather than the territory itself.⁵³

The prestige of the *oboq* was determined mainly by its origin. Written sources often refer to Mongol ancestors. For example, when Qabul-qagan was the ruler of all Mongols, and after his death, “the son of his cousin ruled all the Mongols”.⁵⁴ In the past, scholars have discussed whether the concept of private property existed among the earliest Turco-Mongol tribes. The ownership of grazing land was likely an alien concept to traditional nomadic culture, whereas the concept of livestock ownership did exist. For a society organized on nomadism, mobility was much more important, i.e., the possibility of looking for better pastures when environmental conditions no longer allowed the use of a given territory. Without this possibility, it was arduous to survive; the property of land was most often an impediment.⁵⁵ In a nomadic community, social inequality existed and could result both from the ownership of animals, the means of production, and from the acquisition of a hegemonic position within a clan or tribe, or the production control as it were.⁵⁶ However, nomadic societies tended towards equality and differentiation of resources, or their management could be a reason for one or more individuals to disconnect from the community. One of the basic needs of mobile organization is the community’s integrity. The excessive poverty of an individual or clan could destabilize this condition by pushing those who no longer had a chance of survival to abandon the tribe. Therefore, the redistribution of wealth was one of the primary forms of social leveling wherein each element could benefit from the fruit of the raids or other stages of the production process. Of course, redistribution of wealth could also be, and often was, unequal. Social differences were most often temporary but existed.

We could say that the nomadic societies of these years tended towards equality without achieving it. We should also add that stratification is difficult to stabilize with the exclusive use of elements internal to nomadism. More

52 Vernadsky translated *ulus* as “state” (Vernadsky, *The Mongols and Russia* cit., p. 123). This concept gives more or less the idea, but one should not imagine the *ulus* as a well-defined territory on which an *oboq* acted by imposing its own normative authority. It was a “possession” *sui generis*.

53 For an overview, see Bold, *Mongolian Nomadic Society*, in particular ch. 2–4, 25–129.

54 SSM 1.52, 62; also Rashid ad-Din writes that the ancestors of Temüjin are the same of all the Mongols (RaD II, 69); Vladimircov, *Le régime social*, p. 59.

55 Ochir-Bold, *Mongolian nomadic Society*, 49; Scholz, *Nomadismus*, 25–27.

56 Khazanov, *Nomads and the Outside World*, 152.

often, it was precisely the interaction with the outside world, with the sedentary societies, that reinforced the differences. This happened with the formation of the Mongol Empire. For example, the rigid hierarchy by which paternal goods were distributed among children is an example of how things tended to change even after unification. As mentioned, those born to the first wife enjoyed a privileged position compared to others. Among those born to the same wife, the eldest son inherited his father's main assets. Generally, he was sent to check the pastures further away. The younger children remained in the nearest territories, while the youngest became the *hearth guardian*.⁵⁷ According to Vladimircov, the cadet son received the *yurt* of his father and his wives, becoming “*äzhän*,” i.e., *owner*.⁵⁸ Rashid ad-Din is more explicit on the topic: “The Mongol’s custom wants the cadet to be called Äzhän; because he stays at home, his goods, business, and domestic economy are up to him.”⁵⁹ The *yurt* (a Turkic word that has its Mongolian correspondent in *nutunq/nutuq*) was the territory on which an *oboq*, or parts of it, had decided to settle for more or less long periods.⁶⁰ Rashid ad-Din talks about it on more than one occasion as the territory on which the clans camped and describes it as a spatial area impervious to external infiltration.⁶¹ The concept of *nutug* is of great importance for the productive organization of *oboqs*. Besides the residence of households, it is the grazing space and ‘the natural prerequisite for the nomadic economy’.⁶²

Another important figure was the *anda*. An *anda* (*sworn brother*) was an essential element for social cohesion between different *oboqs*.⁶³ Temüjin and Zhamuka became *anda* when they were only eleven years old.⁶⁴ This bond likely had deep roots in the Turco-Mongol tribal tradition.⁶⁵ The status of *anda* was voluntarily transmissible. “Once the Van-khan made himself *anda*, sworn brother of my father, Yesügei. Whoever is *anda* to my father is as if he were

57 SSM I.54, 63; Yesügei Bagatur, Timüjin’s father “He hurried home and took two brothers with him, the elder Nekün and the younger Maritai, guardian of the hearth”. Anche in RaD II, 30: “*Ažän* means cadet son, the one who stays at home and in the yurt; that is, the fire master of the yurt”.

58 Vladimircov, *Le régime social*, 67.

59 RaD II, 60.

60 SSM II.85, 77; II.93, 81; III.215, 89; Bold, *Mongolian nomadic Society*, 36–37 and 41–42; Vladimircov, *Le régime social*, 69.

61 RaD I, 49, 79, 87 and 93; see also Vladimircov, *Le régime social*, 71.

62 Bold, *Mongolian nomadic Society*, 41.

63 Atwood, *Encyclopedia*, 13.

64 SSM III.116, 95.

65 “They had heard the elders say that the law of twinning requires the *anda*, sworn brothers, to be as one soul” SSM III.117, 95.

my father.”⁶⁶ According to Rashid ad-Din, Van-khan became Temüjin’s adoptive father because he had been his father’s *anda*,⁶⁷ and van-khan called Temüjin his son for the same reason.⁶⁸ It was a powerful bond that made friendship lasting, but it was not uncommon for that bond to break. The strength that characterized the relationship between two *anda* is also evidenced by another passage in the *Secret History* in which Zhamuka, teased by the Van-khan of the Kerait – who wanted to attack the Mongols of Temüjin – says: “I cannot fight against an *anda* [in this case refers to Temüjin], and he [the Van-khan] commands me to lead the army”.⁶⁹

Revenge was a widespread practice among the diverse Turco-Mongol tribes on the eve of unification.⁷⁰ It was a familial duty. Ambaqai-qagan, a Mongol, after suffering Tatar violence, “told the middle child of his seven children [...] so that he would pass the message on to [...] one of his ten children: avenge me ... as ruler of all Mongols. Avenge me and continue to avenge me until you have lost your fingernails.”⁷¹ And yet another instance: “Qutula-qagan and Qadagan-Tayzhi [...] they went to seek revenge on the Tatar people. They fought thirteen times without being able to exact revenge and repair the offense.”⁷² Temüjin’s father, Yesügei Bagatur, met some Tatars. They tried to poison him, then Yesügei said: “the Tatars have poisoned me in secret”;⁷³ not surprisingly, as we have seen above, the relations between Tatars and Mongols were characterized by enmity and conflict.⁷⁴ The topic is discussed yet again during the war against the Merkits, “We will destroy and seek revenge against the Merkit Uduid and Uwas”. So too, the Merkit leaders: wanting to avenge the abduction of a woman (Höelün, Temüjin’s mother) by Yesügei Bagatur, embarked on the incursion that had culminated in the bride’s kidnapping promised by

66 SSM II.96, 82–83. Confirmed in SSM III.104, 87.

67 RaD II, 106.

68 RaD II, 135–40.

69 SSM VI.170, 138; further on, Temüjin, already Chinggis Khan, tells to Jamuka: “as divergent as our paths may have been, you have always been my sacred, faithful friend” (SSM II.200, 175). In the end, however, the relationship between the two will break and Jamuka will be killed by the Mongols for betraying his *anda* Temüjin.

70 According to Vladimircov (*Le Régime social*, 65–66) this practice was now in disuse in the early thirteenth century, but in the *Secret History* there are many examples of how it was still widely adopted.

71 SSM I.53, 62.

72 Ibid., I.58, 65.

73 Ibid., I.67, 67.

74 In Ibid., III.133, 106. Temüjin, now elected Chinggis Khan, says: “The Tatars are our old enemies. They killed our fathers and ancestors. So we must attack them”. And further on, Ibid. III.133, 107: “The Tatars [...] from time immemorial have been the murderers of our forefathers and fathers”.

the future Chinggis Khan, Börte.⁷⁵ There are plenty of other examples of this behavior in *The Secret History* as well as in Rashid ad-Din's work.⁷⁶

The *oboq* was a clan in constant movement. Individual migrations became frequent only during a later period.⁷⁷ The search of good pastures required constant displacement. Family groups lived on contiguous land, and the relationship between *oboqs* was very flexible. It was not uncommon for one of these groups to become part of another external group. Sometimes entire groups of *oboqs* or tribes (*irgän*) joined a large *oboq* that could protect them against external attacks. After defeating the Merkits (probably in the last decade of the twelfth century), Temüjin decided to move his *ayil*. The written sources mention the *ayil* as a smaller organizational model compared to the *kuren*, and some scholars have seen this structure as the origin of the individualistic evolution of Mongol nomadism. The *ayil* consisted of a modest group of wagons, a *nomadic family*. The Secret History lists several names of individuals who, although belonging to different tribes, joined the Mongols. In total, individuals from 19 different tribes and an entire *kuren* became part of Temüjin's Mongols.⁷⁸ A similar stream of people occurs shortly after this event: "Others came to Temüjin's side".⁷⁹ The influx of these "external" elements is emblematic of the movement of people between the *oboqs* and, often, between entire *irgän*. When we talk about clan imperviousness, we must refer above all to the lack of openness of the family; the blood bond was fundamental. So much so that relatives or those who still had ancestors in common are called *uruq* by the written sources. On the other hand, those who have joined the *oboq* despite having no blood link are called "*zhats*".⁸⁰ We must add yet another type to these categories; a *zhat* could become a relative by alliance; this was the case of a relationship with no blood bond but welded through a pact stipulated between two or more individuals based exclusively on their word. It was generally the result of marriage, which the written sources mention with the term "*quda*".⁸¹

75 SSM III.111, 92.

76 Ibid., II.76, 71–72, 73; 102, 85 and 136, 108; RaD I, 52 and 53.

77 Bold, *Mongolian nomadic Society*, 61–63; Khazanov, *Nomads and the outside world*, 37ff.

78 SSM III.120, 97–98. The *kuren* was the organizational system that involved several families. See below.

79 Ibid., III.121, 99. It is in this case that Temüjin is nominated *qan* (*qa'an*) of the Mongols. An already heterogeneous set of elements belonging to different tribes.

80 Vladimircov, *Le régime social*, 73–74.

81 Ibid., 58 e 74; RaD, I, p. 87, 157, 175. The *quda* was a very important political factor in the Mongols traditional society, as it was a means to form and consolidate alliance through the marriage of the children. See Atwood, *Encyclopedia*, 460.

A well-established practice among nomadic peoples of the Eurasian steppes was to turn prisoners of war, spared from sudden execution, into servants or slaves.⁸² Therefore, the clan was a precise entity: “each of their branches was well defined, designated by a name or a nickname, which then becomes a clan”.⁸³ However, they were subject to frequent fragmentation, disintegration, and recomposing processes. The Mongol society at the end of the twelfth century was a dynamic universe, continually moving, an elastic magma whose developments were not always easily identifiable. The struggle for the independence of the smaller clans against the strongest and most numerous, the race to hoard the best pastures, the continuous wars between tribes, the search for stronger clans to defend themselves better, and not least the coercive annexations by particularly aggressive and wealthy clans, were external factors that ultimately caused poor social stability. Social inequality within the *oboq* and especially among different *oboqs* was the cause and reason for the strengthening of personalities (usually shepherds) who gained new wealth to the disadvantage of others who, already weak, plunged inexorably into a condition of further precariousness. The birth of a dominant class within Mongol society had its roots well before our sources were written. When we observe the internal dynamics of this community, there were already eminent elements and impoverished groups subject to the authority of others.

The people who in time extended their power over the entire *ulus* appear in the written sources with the name *noyon*.⁸⁴ They were also the result of the victorious struggle on nomadic production grounds in an economic context of general weakness.⁸⁵ Nonetheless – as noted by Vladimircov – they were the result of usurpation, the acquisition of new authority by force to the disadvantage of the more disused *kuren* model according to which it was seniority that determined authority and power over the community.⁸⁶ The theme of class struggle, dear to Marxist historiography, remains central to the investigation of the internal social dynamics that led to the stratification of communities and the emergence of the dominant classes. However, we still must emphasize that the nomadic food production of those years was modest and instrumental

82 We will see below if and to what extent it is legitimate to speak of slavery for the Mongols.

83 RaD, I, p. 136.

84 For instance, in SSM 1.51, 62: “The son of Qulan Bagatu was Yeke Čere. He was the *noyon* of Badai [...]”.

85 Vladimircov, *Le régime social*, 93–94; Grekov and Jakubovskij, *L’Orda d’Oro*, 26–27.

86 Vladimircov (*Le régime social*, p. 94) translates the term *noyon* as ‘maitre’, while Pelliot (P. Pelliot, *Les Mongols et la Papauté*, 306) as ‘signeurs’. De Rachewiltz, in his unsurpassed translation, used *master*. The traditional principle of leadership based on seniority has been considerably weakened in the process of building the unity wanted by Chinggis Khan. Cfr. Humphrey and Hürelbaatar, *Regret as a Political Intervention*, 22–23.

to subsistence, and most often, it proved insufficient. A restricted phenomenon not intended for exchange, which was not absent, had a different dimension and characteristics from what we see in sedentary societies.⁸⁷

3 At the Root of Unification

When Temüjin initiated the subjugation of the Turco-Mongol tribes, the social structure of the latter was probably going through mutations. The account of the *Secret History* suggests that the old organizational form of *Kuren* had entered a crisis in favor of a growing tendency towards individual exploitation of traditional resources (hunting, fishing, breeding, and the products derived from those activities). At the same time, prominent elements emerged as a hegemonic class that some scholars have called “nomadic aristocracy”, the *noyon* we have seen above.

In the mid-twelfth century, the Turco-Mongol nomads founded their social order on the *Kurigen* or *Kuren*. This traditional organizational model was typical of the nomads living in Central and East Asia, and according to it, the families in charge of the community arranged their tents in a circle (*Kuren* means ‘ring’).⁸⁸ The *Kuren* families settled for more or less lengthy periods on a territory, and they based their economy on the resources typical of a poorly diversified production: herding, hunting, milk, and cheese production. The transhumance and migration of a part of society were central aspects of their activity.⁸⁹ At the center of the ring formed by the tents stood the home of the oldest member of the community.

After pursuing thieves who stole eight *yellow-fawn* horses, Temüjin and a companion approached “the tents of a certain tribe, and there they saw the eight horses grazing on the edge of that great *kuren*”.⁹⁰ Later, the *Secret History* shows that, when Zhamuka declared war on Temüjin, he had gathered thirteen tribes with whom were formed three *tümen*;⁹¹ shortly after, he adds that “Chinggis-khan also had thirteen *kuren* and with these, he formed three

87 Bold, *Mongolian nomadic Society*, 22–24.

88 The Mongol word *Chureen* (Russian *Курень*, *Kuren*) has the meaning of “circle”.

89 It should be noted that, on the occasion of the Mongol victory over the Merkits and the consequent election of Temüjin to *qan*, in the early years of the thirteenth century (1203), he felt the need to appoint one of his faithful as guardian of the transhumance wagons. (SSM III.124, 100).

90 SSM I.90, 79–80.

91 The *tümen* was the typical military unit of the steppe nomads. It consisted of ten thousand men. We will go back to this concept and its characteristics more precisely below, dealing with the military organization of the Mongols.

tümen ...".⁹² From the chronicler's use of "also," it would seem that tribes and *kuren* at this time (at the beginning of the thirteenth century) were equivalent, had the same meaning. It is hard to believe that was the case. The *kuren* was never explicitly mentioned with the meaning of tribe. As we have already pointed out, the tribe, *irgän*, was formed by a group of individuals that were bound together, while the *kuren* was an aggregative model, a way of camping with tents and wagons, a productive system that provided for the competition of all members of the social nucleus. Furthermore, the *kuren* was not only a socio-economic organizational model but also a defensive-military system against external aggression.⁹³ This was a necessity, given the extraordinary precariousness that Central-Asian nomadism had to face. It is likely that the *kuren*, a large encampment, was traditionally identified with the tribe. In this sense, the *Secret History* presents another obscure passage: "The elders and the children of a *kuren* of Chinggis-khan, called Aurug [...] of those people left in Aurug [...]". The *kuren* received a name. It gained the function of a village, temporary settlement, however well distinguished from the tribe that lived there.⁹⁴

Today we still can't precisely pinpoint the moment when the model of the *kuren* was in crisis for the benefit of the *ayil*. Indeed, the transition was slow and did not affect all the tribes in the region uniformly. When Temüjin's army moved westward, the *kuren* had virtually disappeared. The references to the *kuren* are frequent in the *Secret History*,⁹⁵ but already on the occasion of the clash between the Mongols and Merkits, the chronicle mentions the *ayil*.⁹⁶

92 SSM III.129, 104.

93 Bold, *Mongolian Nomadic Society*, 61–62.

94 Still in the *Secret History* (SSM V.151, 123) we read that Chinggis Khan, seeing the Van-qan (i.e. the ruler of the Kerait) "completely exhausted by hunger [...] introduced him into his *kuren* and kept him at his own expense". In short, the examples in which *irgän* and *kuren* are well distinguished, in the sources, are not lacking and indicate that this difference was well marked for the Mongols themselves. On the possibility of using the term "tribe" in this context, see Di Cosmo, "State formation," 18 and n. 60.

95 After the defeat of the Merkits, many tribes joined the Mongols. *The Secret History* III.119–20, mentions their names. Again, in SSM III.120, 98: "Also came with a *kuren* those of Baarin...". And further on, SSM III.122, 99: "Others came from Timujin: a *kuren* from Geniges, Qunan and others, with a *kuren* from Daritai-Očigin, a *kuren* from Unčin-Saqaid ... with a *kuren* from Sača-Beki". Regardless of the names, which are difficult to keep up with at the time of the first unification, almost all the Turco-Mongol tribes lived on *kuren*. Again, in SSM IV.136, 108: "The old and the children of a *kuren* of Činggis-qan, called Aurug...".

96 SSM III.112, 93: "They seized Qa'atai Darmala [one of the leaders Merkit] and brought him back, they forced him to wear a cangue made of a wooden board, They took him straight

The succession of the two models is still an unresolved question. From this point of view, the change in collective economic bases and their organization has undoubtedly played a role. Descent became a prominent factor and, together with it, the ability of individuals to gain authority in two ways: one abstract (the sacred sphere, shamanism) and one more concrete (control over resources, pastures, and livestock above all).⁹⁷ These individuals were those who organized production, migration and redistributed the spoils of raids. By the mid-twelfth century, the Turco-Mongol peoples, dedicated to nomadism and organized on the *Kuren*, owned goods, gathered around charismatic figures to exploit the resources available through smaller groups drifting towards increased individual exploitation of resources. Written sources call this model *ayil*:⁹⁸ smaller households in which production loses in part its collective dimension to the advantage of higher individualism.⁹⁹ Was this phenomenon the result of the Chinggisid conquests, of the vast territories such victories made available? Was it, on the other hand, a change that was already taking place between the dominant ethnic groups and in general, within the vast human magma that made up these populations between the twelfth and thirteenth centuries? It can be said, in any case, that Chinggis Khan's successful unification represented a powerful jolt both internally and externally.

The unification started a slow process that led to changes within the social structure and consequently also to that of the army. We should additionally consider that the conquests created loot, wealth to distribute, and, at the same time, an increase in the authority of those who proved capable of managing this surplus. Social stratification becomes even more pronounced when these peoples find themselves involved in a system that is strange to them, that of structured exchange, trade, and, therefore, mobile wealth.¹⁰⁰ Even with some reservations, we can say that the nomadic model entered a crisis, paradoxically,

to Qaldun Burqan. Someone informed them that Belgütei's mother was 'in that ayil over there'.

97 Tosi, *Dalla tribù all'impero*, 262.

98 The *ayil* was the military and economic base of the Tatar-Mongolian society after the conquests of Chinggis Khan. It was a territorial division that we could define, with some reservations, as feudal. Naturally, the term should be understood in a general sense, without rigid assimilation to European models. See also Buell, *Historical Dictionary*, 115 (who gives the spelling *ayil*).

99 This very element, the collective exploitation of resources, is one of the fundamental characteristics of *kuren*.

100 Tosi, *Dalla tribù all'impero*, 270.

when it began to be successful. In other words, sedentarization is a source of weakness for a traditionally nomadic society.¹⁰¹

The transition from *kuren* to *ayil* did not occur when the Mongols of Temüjin defeated and subjugated big tribes, by size and cultural background (like the Naimans, Merkits, Kheraits, Tatars, etc.), but before. According to the examples reported in the written testimonies, we may see that by the end of the twelfth century, the *kuren* was a generic model, emptied of its social significance. It existed, but had entered a phase of final crisis, so that more and more prominent elements (particularly *the noyons*, but also rich characters belonging to the *bogols*¹⁰² favored by eminent *noyons*) detached from the great ring, to form mobile nuclei, that were smaller with an increased propensity to individual exploitation of resources. This gave rise to rapid disintegration wherein much of the traditional social balance changed. The ancient structure of the nomadic tribe was decomposing into smaller parts. The *noyons* came to break away from the community they belonged to. The *oboq* thus came to encompass other *oboqs*. The winners subjected the losers to two seemingly different phenomena: the sharp increase in the constraints of dependence (*bogol*) and the strengthening of the *noyonate*, that is, those eminent characters whose prestige was later definitively and formally recognized by Chinggis Khan. The small cattle owners (*qarachu*) on their side maintained a status closely linked to livestock possession and the products they could acquire from it but in a context of increasing insecurity or, we might say, mobility. They changed their contacts quickly and could not achieve affordable economic stability in order to be alone. The constant conflictual context in which the Turco-Mongol peoples lived generated insecurity and pushed the weaker classes towards the most influential and better-organized *military*, which was the wealthiest. The affirmation of what some scholarship called the “steppe aristocracy” and the parallel subjugation of the weaker classes was already in place when, in 1206, Temüjin completed the unification of the Turco-Mongol tribes and begin the military campaign against China. With these achievements, however, social differentiation increased substantially, and what we can rightly define as an *egalitarian society* became, in fact, a model of inequality. This dynamic has suggested a juxtaposition between the Mongol social structure of this period with that of feudal manifestations in Western Europe.

101 Lattimore, “The Geographical Factor,” 1–16.

102 A category that we define here, to simplify, as slaves. We shall see later on that the definition is not entirely appropriate.

4 Further Developments: The Concept of “Nomadic Feudalism”

Is it appropriate to define the Mongol society of these years as “feudal”? If this is possible, what characteristics of this social model make such a comparison feasible? For conceptual coherence, we should follow an expositive path that ignores theoretical categories of social, political and economic spheres distant from the one in question, but since the concept of nomad feudalism has been at stake for a long time – and perhaps inevitably so – I think it is worth dwelling on. There have been many definitions around this term, as far as Western Europe is concerned, and the scholarship on the subject is remarkable. It is enough to mention some works that have laid the foundations for our reflection.

Marc Bloch entitled his book *The Feudal Society*, stressing social aspects and the erroneous conception of the term as exclusively juridical. On the other hand, François Louis Ganshoff wrote the opposite.¹⁰³ Both books have strengths and base their analysis on solid foundations. If there is a feudal right, it will be difficult for it to be expressed in a society governed by diverse dynamics. The law is also an expression of social progress, so the two points seem to be closely linked. It is challenging to determine whether one is the fruit of the other and in what order. To repropose the long debate on the existence of one or more feudalisms (of the so-called *feudal mutation*, i.e. distinct periods in which the phenomenon would have manifested itself in different forms) would take us away from our subject.¹⁰⁴ Albeit simplifying, we can state that feudalism in Latin-German Europe was “one of the many components of the society and the organization of medieval powers”. This component “consisted essentially of the armed clientele, i.e., the retinue of warriors who swore allegiance to a lord”. The dominant features of this component were “the domination of military aristocracy over society; the military foundation of royal power; the consolidation of these military bases through a system of links of fidelity and loyalty; [...] the use of the land as an instrument of reward [...]”.¹⁰⁵ From this definition, we can discern at least two elements: feudalism is a label to which different meanings can be attributed, and on this topic plenty of scholars have broached the historiography of the Middle Ages. For some regions of Western Europe, the label of *feudalism* is without doubts correct. Nevertheless – and this is the second aspect – seeking to deprive the term of the significances we

103 F.L. Ganshoff, *Che cos'è il feudalesimo?*, Torino 1982–2003³.

104 For comparative analysis, well-documented and with a rich bibliography, see Bournazel and Poly, *Les féodalités*, in particular vol. 2: *Féodalité: universalité du concept*, 513–750.

105 Albertoni and Provero, *Il feudalesimo*, 9.

usually associate with it on the basis of our experience, what can we observe for the Mongolian reality in the late twelfth century?

Since the nineteenth century, many scholars have dealt with this aspect and the concept of nomad feudalism. In the 1920s, Soviet scholars caged the Mongol society of the late twelfth century into the definition of *nomad feudalism*, focusing on the productive aspect.¹⁰⁶ The Revolution was recent, as well as Weber's studies of the social order; the influence of these two factors on Russian historical thought was remarkable. They applied a Marxist method to different contexts, often provoking inaccurate interpretations, but providing a contribution whose importance for the evolution of historical knowledge is still fundamental. The impact of Stalinism in the years before the Second World War on the work of Soviet historians was castrating and imposed a substantial limitation on genuine Marxist interpretation and the use of the traditional means of materialism to understand historical processes; the line to be taken was that of the five phases: primitive society, slavery, feudalism, capitalism and finally the socialist realization of society.¹⁰⁷ All this inhibited the possibility of non-ideological investigations of the phenomenon, but it also helped increase the use of social sciences auxiliary to history. Soviet historians have widely used interpretative categories of an anthropological and sociological nature, and the results of the research have been positively affected.

If we wanted to adopt the term feudalism in its strictly economic meaning, we could simply discard its effectiveness for the traditional Mongolian reality. That would be a stretch. The most interesting aspect seems to be rather the whole of human relations and the formation of built solidarity and parental ramifications; in the latter case, we may find something similar in the traditional Mongolian society. Concerning the first aspect: the European economy of feudal times has specific characteristics that were completely absent in the nomadic economy. They relate mainly to the exploitation of land and its distribution as an element for consolidating relations between powers.

As far as human relations and the increasing inequality between classes are concerned, we may notice that the rise of a new group (a phenomenon already in full development in the second half of the twelfth century) which emerged victorious from the internal clan struggle and was the result of a coercive affirmation of its supremacy over other individuals belonging to the same clan,

106 If for Vladimircov at the dawn of the thirteenth century, such relations – which he described as feudal – were already fully accomplished, for Grekov and Jakubovsky they would have been fully realized only after the Mongols had conquered and ruled for decades regions where the feudal model was well established.

107 Bold, *Mongolian nomadic Society*, 16.

marks the passage from an ancient conception of power to a new one. The first was founded on the law of seniority, which was typical of tribal organization, and the second was closely linked to the individual exploitation of available resources and, therefore, to solid economic strength. Temüjin represents the highest level of this emerging class, as the exponent of that hegemonic class, let us say nomad aristocracy, which in the second half of the twelfth century was extending its authority over its clan/*oboq* and, through the exploitation of its human resources, over external and economically weaker clans. The first part of the *Secret History*, presenting the genealogy and childhood of the leader, often refers to the ancestors of the Khan and his friends, describing the physiognomy of the *oboqs* to which they belonged; aristocratic clans whose dominant character over other and weaker clans is no less evident. The alliances between the clan of Temüjin and other eminent clans are well established before he became Khan. The figure of the Khan is the clan leader or, within the tribe/*irgän*, the most influential personage among the clans that belong to it. His charismatic streak was expressed primarily during raids, robberies, or wars.¹⁰⁸

Analyzing the armed clientele, we find that the figure of *nökör/nököd* was of great importance in the pre-unification of Mongolian societies. The *nököd* were free people who spontaneously placed themselves at the service of a clan leader, a *noyon* with whom they had no blood ties most of the time. On the contrary, the case in which a *nökör* served in a different *oboq* from his native one was widespread.¹⁰⁹ They were *fideles* who could not be forced to serve. They were tied to their *noyons* by a bond of loyalty; their primary duty was to perform permanent military service. They were the armed guard of the clan leaders, the directly controlled and controllable part of the army (an elite group). They lived shoulder to shoulder with their leader and served him on hunting excursions. In peacetime, they were domestic servants but had to be ready at any time to take up arms and follow their lord. They could not be assimilated to the *bogol* because, if the latter had an indissoluble and unilateral link to their master, the *nököd* did not. They could break their bond at any time, and the task of the *bogol* was not military. Furthermore, the armed

108 Vladimircov, *Le régime social*, 100–110.

109 Bold, *Mongolian nomadic Society*, 110; Vladimircov, *Le régime social*, 111 and 113. It was also common for a *nököd* to leave his *noyon* to enter the service of another, perhaps a rival. In this case the “betrayed” *noyon* did not react violently; the passage from one clan to another was a widespread practice not considered outrageous by the *noyons* and the khans.

clients of the noyons received the *qubi*, remuneration in kind (roughly similar to the Latin *beneficium*).¹¹⁰

In the early thirteenth century, the Mongol society was still predominantly nomad, linked to its traditional productive structure. Nomadism involved a very mobile conception of the land, of the territory. As we have seen above, talking about the *ulus*, the territory/patrimony was not an appreciable asset as a spatial entity, but above all, for its demographic resources. That is, the *ulus* were a people, in particular the people who lived on a specific territory. The territory itself was of relative interest to the nomadic shepherds; they were always moving around so that one land was no better than another unless it had specific characteristics suitable for grazing. Thus, the *qubi* most of the time resulted in an *ayil* reward. The meritorious *nököd* received certain *ayil*, which he could dispose of as he wished within the limits of the physical protection of its members. The *nököd*'s rights over his *ayils* and the territory he inhabited, resulted in the admiration of justice and the management of clients whose movements were both upward and downward in the social scale.¹¹¹ In addition to this remuneration in kind, the *nököd* also obtained full protection from his *noyon*.

In this way, the *nököds* could use their men, obtained through *qubi*, also militarily in the common goal of serving the *noyon* to whom they were tied. Chinggis Khan used this system when he carried out the full restructuring of the army in 1206. However, if, on the one hand, this system allowed greater control over the territory through solidarity as well as an efficient organization of the army, on the other, it produced a process of social disintegration. Power was effectively dispersed into men that were more or less politically powerful and very mobile for the service they provided. In other words, before the creation of the empire, increasingly influential classes emerged, hegemonic on a growing mass of individuals whose claims would lead to a more personal conception of power. Chinggis Khan succeeded in keeping this scaffolding firmly under his control, but at his death, the divisions quickly emerged, giving rise to an immense empire. One that was, in any case, born internally undermined and lacking the unification to hold together over the long term.

When Chinggis Khan defeated the Kheraits and the Naimans in the Year of the Panther,¹¹² he proceeded to distribute the benefits to his faithful followers,

110 Bat-Ochir Bold proposed a parallel that I find acceptable between the Mongol *nökör* and the *hus-carl* in the Anglo-Saxon societies and the *Druzhenniki* in Rus' (Bold, *Mongolian nomadic Society*, 110), a sort of *fideles*.

111 Vladimircov, *Le régime social*, 151.

112 SSM VIII.202, 178; which is to say 1206.

those who had supported and helped him throughout his military efforts. All the subjugated tribes became, in this circumstance, unagan bogol of the sole great ulus of Chinggis khan.¹¹³ This *ulus*, whose proportions were remarkable, was the prerogative of the elected official by the Quriltai, the assembly of the hegemonic clan. The male descendants of Chinggis automatically became *köbägün*, or “imperial princes”.¹¹⁴

Although there were similarities between the social structure of the populations in the period before unification and what we mean by feudalism, the differences were more pronounced. In the European West, despite the considerable disorganization of the phases of development, the city never lost its role as the hub of the territorial power system since Augustus’ empire. In Mongol society, the city never had this role. It represented a center of collective power only in the fourteenth century, after the conquests were already finished, giving rise to acculturation phenomena whose dynamics are not the subject of our study. Secondly, we must underline the profound difference that Europe, and Italy in particular, knew regarding the centers of political power from the first great migrations of the fifth century to the affirmation of communal supremacy – the existence of rural, territorial, and landed estates, the phenomenon of encastellation. All these aspects constituted a very long period, well studied in Italy and other parts of Western Europe, but which we cannot reasonably apply to the Mongol communities, neither before nor after its partial stabilization. The nomadic model from which it originated influenced subsequent developments in society and remained prominent even when the Mongols encountered urban models and stratified social structures, nor did the people of the steppe know how to adapt to the availability of a territory that by extension would have allowed them to move closer to urban culture.

5 The Instrument of the Army and the Realization of Solidarity

Plano Carpini’s *Historia Mongalorum* deals extensively with the Mongol military organization.¹¹⁵ Reading the Franciscan with a critical eye on military

113 Ibid., VIII.203, 180–81. Rashid ad Din wrote: “Since Chinggis Khan became *qan*, master of the conjunction of the planets, autocrat of the earth and time, all Mongolian clans and tribes, related or extraneous, became his slaves and servants”, RaD 11.12; Vladimircov, *Le régime social*, 129.

114 It is Vladimircov’s definition (*Le régime social*, 127), who claims that the word means literally *son*; SSM VIII.202, 178 and VIII. 207, 183.

115 “Dicto de imperio, dicendum est hoc modo de bello: primo de ordinatione acierum[...].” Giovanni di Pian del Carpine, *Historia Mongalorum*, 275.

aspects is one of the most interesting ways to interpret his work, and it was also important for him because the collection of information on the military, armaments, techniques, and technologies used by the Mongols, was one of the objectives of his journey. The *Historia Mongalorum* remains, therefore, a document of inestimable value to deepen his knowledge of the military as a way to intrigue and terrify the people of Western Europe. It constitutes, however, by its nature, a partial point of view, the impression of an “agent” on an exploratory mission whose purpose was to report to the Pope on how to face a potential new threat.

One of the consequences of the unification carried out by Temüjin was precisely the reorganization of the army.¹¹⁶ A compact mass of men that fought almost exclusively on horseback as a cohesive unit under the direction of their commander. This important military system was the result of the complex social structure that underpinned recruitment. In practice, as George Bratianu wrote: “the army represents all this *marching* nomadic feudality.”¹¹⁷

By the end of the twelfth century, Temüjin became Khan,¹¹⁸ after the entire “Merkit’s ulus had fled in panic along the Slenge and our troops were chasing them, killing and capturing the fugitives.”¹¹⁹ As soon as he was elected, the new Khan reorganized his retinue. Three *kortšin* had to carry the quiver; two canteen workers (*čerbi*),¹²⁰ one of his faithful, Degai, received the role, very important for the nomadic organization of the ulus, of herd controller. Degai’s brother, Güčügür, was nominated guardian of the transhumance wagons. Another faithful follower, Dodai-čerbi, was appointed to lead the servants and slaves of the ulus, while three other men became sword-bearers under the command of Qasar, another partisan of Temüjin. Three men were appointed custodians of the herd of horses; four others became scouts (a crucial task within the Mongolian military organization, since they were the ones who carried out the preliminary reconnaissance after which the Mongols decided whether and to what extent to proceed with the army); finally, a Khan advisor was chosen in the person of Sübe’etai Bagatur. The *Secret History* says that “as

116 May, *The Mongol Art of War*, in particular ch. 2, 27–41.

117 Bratianu, *La Mer Noire*, 187: “l’armée représente toute cette féodalité nomade en marche”.

118 This outcome is still unclear today because Temüjin, at the time of his election, was at the head of a relatively small union of tribes, had no particularly eminent descendants and his military career was certainly not one of excellence. Unfortunately, the sources, and the *Secret History* in particular, are silent on this aspect.

119 SSM III.110, 91.

120 The term *Čerbi* is used in the *Secret History* to refer to those who served the military chiefs in times of war and took care of the livestock and the canteen in times of peace. The term has been used in Mongolia until recently to refer to military and administrative officials. See Bold, *Mongolian nomadic Society*, 110–11.

for Sübeetai-Bagatur” [Temüjin] stated “I will make myself a mouse to collect and set aside for you. I’ll make myself a black crow to clean up what’s outside with you. I will make myself felt to cover myself together with you; I will make myself yurt felt and try to wrap myself together with you”.¹²¹

After this first general organization of his closest collaborators, Temüjin turned on the army. He began in 1203, after the victory over the Kheraits.¹²² The Khan’s bodyguard, the *keshig*, was selected and divided into two units: 70 *turgewuts* for the day guard and 80 *kebtewuts* for the night guard. To the guards’ corp belonged “the sons and younger brothers of the noyons among the most valiant and powerful, as well as the sons of freemen”.¹²³ Another thousand men went under the command of Arqai-Qasar for the battles, while in peacetime, he was to be the commander of the *keshig*. The *čerbi* increased from two to six. Temüjin gave the noyons command over 1,110 soldiers. He organized the shifts and times of the change of guard between night and day and began the campaign against the Naimans, which would put him in charge of all the nomadic tribes in the region.¹²⁴

The Khan’s guard was subject to strict discipline and operated under heavy responsibility. Those who delayed in joining the military were punished with thirty lashes the first time, seventy the second, and if this happened for the third time, were whipped thirty-seven times, and then expelled from the corps along with punishment in terms of social status. If, on one hand, there were heavy responsibilities, on the other, the Khan’s guard enjoyed exclusive privileges. A member of the guard was a socially eminent personage; “any soldier of my *keshig* is above any *mingghan* in the army”.¹²⁵ The Khan’s guard did not participate in wars of conquest; they intervened mainly internally and in exceptional cases were led by the Khan in person. Chinggis Khan chose his generals almost exclusively from his guard. This system was conceived very carefully. No general and no noyon could punish a soldier on his own initiative. In this regard, any decision had to go through the Khan. Those who acted without his approval were punished in the same way they intended to punish the soldier.¹²⁶ Moreover, as the generals were part of the guard, the Khan knew them personally and had direct knowledge of their various strengths.

The military leaders enjoyed special privileges: they were exempt from any form of tribute; all those who fell prisoners in the war became automatically

121 SSM III.124, 100–01.

122 Bartold, *Turkestan*, 383; SSM VI.186, 155–56.

123 SSM VI.191, 160–61.

124 Ibid., VI.192, 161–62.

125 Ibid., VII.196, 168.

126 Bartold, *Turkestan*, 383.

their property and the *noyons* could dispose of them at will. They could even present themselves to the Khan without special permission. If sentenced to death, they could only be prosecuted for the ninth crime committed. Finally, during feasts, they occupied a place of honor and received wine.¹²⁷

In 1206, Chinggis Khan had carried out a second and much more radical reorganization of the army.¹²⁸ According to Plano Carpini, the reform of the Khan led to a distinct hierarchical division for which the base of the army were the *mingghan*, composed of a thousand men each (the *chiliarchy* of Plano Carpini); according to the *Secret History*, the *mingghan* created by the reform of 1206 were 95.¹²⁹ Juvaini says: “[the Mongols] divided all the people into companies of ten, and appointed one of the ten commanders over the other nine; and of every ten commanders, one received the title of commander of one hundred, for all the hundred were subject to his command. And so on with one thousand men, and likewise every ten thousand, above which they placed one commander whom they called the commander of the *tümen*.”¹³⁰ The *tümen* was composed – theoretically – of ten thousand men.¹³¹ At each *tümen*, there was a commander of the *tümen*, this entity comprised ten *mingghan*, each composed of one thousand men and led by one chiliarch; in each *mingghan* there were ten *ja’un*, each composed of one hundred men and led by one centurion. The smallest unit – *arban* – consisted of ten soldiers, one of whom was the superior officer, and the other nine were to obey him. When there was a need for men, the commander of the *tümen* addressed the chiliarch, and so on.¹³² Naturally, the supreme leader of the army was the Great Khan, who directly appointed the heads of the *mingghan*, the chiliarchs.¹³³

127 Bartold, *Turkestan*, 385–86.

128 “Hoc modo Chingiscan ordinavit, ut decem hominibus preponeretur unus, et ille secundum nos appellatur decanus; decem autem decanis preponeretur unus, qui centenarius nominatur; decem vero centenariis preponeretur unus, qui millenarius appellatur; decem millenariis preponeretur unus, et ille numerus vocatur tenebre apud eos.” Giovanni di Pian del Carpine, *Historia Mongalorum*, 266.

129 “Excluding the People of the Forests [north and north-west], the commanders of a thousand of the Mongol people appointed by Činggis Qa’an were ninety-five”, SSM VIII.202, 178–79; Giovanni di Pian del Carpine, *Historia Mongalorum*, 462.

130 Juvaini I, 31.

131 Luciano Petech appropriately wrote that Plano Carpini translated *tümen* as “darkness”, perhaps because ancient Turkic *tuman* means *fog* (*Historia Mongalorum*, 462, n. 2); also in modern Russian *tuman* means *fog*.

132 Juvaini I, 31.

133 The *chiliarchs* were the only ones to have a political role; they were the only military officers allowed (and required) to participate the *quriltai* and, when necessary, elect the new qa’an. Atwood, *Encyclopedia*, 139; May, *The Mongol art*, 91.

The “decimal” organization (*tümen*, thousands, hundreds, and tens) was not a novelty introduced by the Mongols; nomadic armies had already adopted this quantitative distribution for some time. With Chinggis Khan, for the first time, three generals were entrusted each *tümen*.¹³⁴ One of them led the left wing (at the time of the reform was Muquili), another, Bughurij, commanded the right wing, and Naya oversaw the central part.¹³⁵ This order was unquestionable. Anyone who dared to change the operation wing was immediately executed in front of the army.¹³⁶

Handwritten Arab-Persian sources and the *Secret History* provide us with Mongol terms for the singular military divisions: as we saw previously, the *tümen* were the largest unit. Each *tümen* included ten *mingghan* (the chiliarchies of Plano Carpini), each *mingghan* was in turn composed of ten *jaghun*, and each *jaghun* included ten *arban*. The system that brought an individual to lead each division was straightforward. The *arbans* were under commanders elected by the members of the *arbans* themselves. The mechanism was the same for the *jaghuns*, while it changed for the *mingghan* and the *tümen*. In these cases, it was the Great Khan himself who chose the commanders. These soldiers had a certain amount of tactical autonomy and could make their own decisions on the battlefield. It was extremely important because it made every soldier fundamental not only as a physical force but also as an active organizer of war strategy. The commanders of the major units, *jaghun* and *mingghan*, came mainly from the most influential noyons. It was a precise hierarchy, but also fluid at the same time. The small representatives of the minor tribes, *tarkhat* could rise through the ranks, if they were excellent in battle, and reach the command of a *mingghan*.

The strict discipline of the Mongol army was another factor that struck contemporaries. Juvaini did not hesitate to praise them¹³⁷ and said: “If a sudden need for weapons arises, the order is given that many thousands of men should be in place at a certain time of day or night [...] and they arrive, not a blink of an eye before or after the appointed time”.¹³⁸ Obedience and discipline are such that “if there is a commander of a hundred thousand at a distance from

134 «Cuncto vero exercitui preponuntur due duces vel tres, ita tamen quod habeant respectum ad unum», *Historia Mongalorum* cit., p. 276. “And [Chinggis Khan] ordered Qorči to be head [of a] *tümen*, sharing the command with Taqai and Ašig”, SSM, VIII, 205, p. 183.

135 Bartold, *Turkestan* cit., p. 386; SSM, VIII, 202, pp. 178–179.

136 Ibid., pp. 391–392. In a passage of his *History*, Juvaini maintains that during the hunting trips, which for the Mongols were a very serious matter, the strict instructions of the khan could not be broken. In this case, too, one risked death.

137 Juvaini cit., I, p. 50.

138 Ibid., I, pp. 51–52.

the Khan equal to the interval between sunrise and sunset [...] the Khan sends one knight to punish him". No one could violate the order that each soldier was to take his place in the individual units.¹³⁹ Prisoners captured during the expeditions of conquest were often ranked in the army; they were sent to the front lines.¹⁴⁰ The Mongol cavalry intervened later and with very well studied tactics: a combat system that belonged to the nomadic way of life. In battle, the prisoner was ordered to charge the enemy as an initial, destabilizing shock force. Sometimes they were given the task of going on an exploratory mission to peoples the Mongols did not trust and who feared they might kill the ambassadors instead of sending them back safe and sound.¹⁴¹

The Mongol knights were formidable archers, and their tactics were entirely new to those who faced them. They combined the typical systems of the steppe knights with a new and better organization. They would attack on horseback and then disappear and reappear on their disoriented opponent. Indeed, the Mongol army was also very well structured.¹⁴²

The quantitative dimension was not decisive in their victories, even if numbers are very questionable and unreliable.¹⁴³ In 1206 by reforming the guard, Chinggis Khan constituted 95 *tümens* (therefore, including the guard, the total was of about 96 thousand men). De Hartog and Dunn substantially confirm these numbers by providing other figures: they estimate that there were about 70,000 men in the Mongol army until the end of the thirteenth century, which became 250,000, including auxiliary troops from other subjugated areas.¹⁴⁴

Di Cosmo affirms that in 1206 the Mongol army likely did not significantly exceed 100,000 units.¹⁴⁵ Masson Smith wrote that the Mongols who engaged in military operations in Russia and Caucasia were circa 600,000.¹⁴⁶ In order to give an idea of the size of Chinggis' army, we would have to consider the Mongols' method in battle. It is well-known that they used the male population of the conquered cities (the ones that did not serve any other purpose) as vanguards in near-suicidal attacks in which the wretched men who escaped execution on the spot were sent against enemy armies before the Mongol

139 Ibid., I, p 54: "No soldier may enlist except in the hundred, thousand or ten assigned to him, and cannot take refuge elsewhere. [Anyone who transgresses this order] is put to death in front of the troops". Juvaini I, 27–30.

140 See Plano Carpini, *Historia Mongalorum* cit., VI, 14, pp. 281–282.

141 Juvaini I, 49.

142 May, *The Mongol art of war*, especially ch. 2, 31ff.

143 Masson Smith, "Mongol manpower," 271–99.

144 De Hartog, "The Army of Chinghis Qan," 484; Dunn, *The Ageless Chinese*, 246–47.

145 Di Cosmo, "State formation," 17. For a general analysis of numbers, see also May, *The Mongol art of war*, 27–28.

146 Masson-Smith, "Mongol manpower," 272.

cavalry intervened. Thus, the perception that many authors had of the Mongol army may have been filtered by this. The effectiveness of the military apparatus of Chinggis Khan was the result of various components among which the number of men was the least important. The systematic militarization of society, the method of combat, the preparation, and tactics used in battle had a much more significant impact. The Tatar-Mongol army consisted almost exclusively of the cavalry (mostly heavy and in some cases light). The infantry became a full-fledged military corps only after the establishment of the empire, in particular after the partial military reorganization carried out by Tamerlane after 1372. In addition to the frequent use of infantry, Tamerlane limited the use of compulsory military service, enlisting only a segment of the rural population, and provided local rulers with the number of soldiers to provide the main army.

It is difficult to analyze all the factors that determined the overwhelming success of Chinggis Khan's armies. Apart from the wickedness that would have animated these demons on horseback, it is necessary to investigate what new elements they brought to the medieval way of fighting. The equipment and use of weapons were undoubtedly one such factor. Chinggis Khan had proceeded to make the army compact, well organized, and had transferred the characteristics of nomadic society to the military. The horse was therefore used not only as a heavy weapon in warfare but also as a fast transport tool with which to make rapid and sudden incursions and just as quickly move away before the enemy could react. They also used harmonic and collective movements of thousands of warriors and the attack with bows was a weapon that Mongol knights knew how to use very well, even on the move.

Information on the Mongols' military techniques and battle equipment was derived mainly from sources written long after the conquests. For instance, the *Historia Mongalorum* and the *Historia Tartarorum*, but also the *Itinerarium* of William of Rubruck, together with other scattered sources (think for example of the *Encyclica contra Tartaros* and the letter *De adventu Tartarorum*, both by Frederick II and written in 1241) constitute an information basin of extraordinary importance.¹⁴⁷ Plano Carpini was very clear with regards to the armament with which a Mongolian knight was equipped. According to the Franciscan "Everyone must have at least the following weapons: two or three bows, or at least a good one, and three large quivers full of arrows, and an axe, and ropes

147 The first is in MGH. *Constitutiones et Acta Publica Imperatorum et Regnum*, II, Hannover, 1896, 322–25; the second in Matteo Paris, *Cronica Majora*, a cura di H.R. Luard, IV, London 1877, pp. 112–119; see also Giovanni di Pian del Carpine, *Historia Mongalorum*, 453.

to draw the machines”.¹⁴⁸ According to the Franciscan, the wealthiest also possess sharp and double-bladed swords. They were well-armored and carefully bard the horse. The use of different armor and their composition was not entirely clear. There were no precise descriptions of them, such as that can be found in writings by Plano Carpini.¹⁴⁹ According to the Franciscan, it could be of two types: leather or metal. The first consisted of strips of leather tied together “corrigioli sive corduli”¹⁵⁰ and superimposed one on top of the other for a small portion along the lower and upper edge. Therefore, it was a very mobile armor that allowed abrupt movements, more than the heavy mesh or metal armor used by European armies. The metal armor was like the leather one. It consisted of thin strips of metal, with “eight small holes”¹⁵¹ through which a string that held the strips together passed. Some knights bore a spear with a hook at the end of it to unhitch the opponent. The Mongols used to build rather small shields, but they were not used in battles, because they were too bulky for an archer. According to Plano Carpini, they were used mainly during the night watch.¹⁵²

According to a passage we have already mentioned, the Mongols used “ropes to draw machines”.¹⁵³ The Tatar army had likely well-built and technically advanced war machines. On the other hand, the Mongols’ hoarding of human knowledge was one of the primary objectives during their conquests. Following the itinerary of the military campaigns after the conquest of China (1211), thanks to the detailed description of Juvaini, we can see how, in every city that fell into their hands, the Mongols executed without hesitation those who fought them, but they regularly spared the artisans.¹⁵⁴ Juvaini states that that after the first attack upon Bukhara “the citadel and the walls were razed to the ground and the Mongols fled”. And they took with them the common people and the craftsmen who had escaped the sword, either to serve as conscripts, or to exercise their trade. So, what Juvaini called ordinary people became part of the army, while the craftsmen were used so that they could make their art available to the Mongols. Chinggis Khan repeatedly demonstrated admiration for

148 “Arma autem ista ad minus omnes debent habere: duos arcus vel tres, vel unum bonum ad minus, et tres pharetras magnas plenas sagittis, et unam securim, et funes ad machinas trahendas”. Ibid. VI. 4, 276.

149 The description given by Plano Carpini is the first on the Mongol armor and the most complete. (Pian del Carpine, *Historia Mongalorum*, 463).

150 Pian del Carpine, *Historia Mongalorum* VI. 4, 277.

151 Ibid., VI.8, 278.

152 Ibid., VI. 10, 279.

153 Ibid., VI.4 (cfr. also n. 40).

154 Juvaini I, 85.

manual and intellectual capabilities.¹⁵⁵ Emblematic is the case of the capture of Samarkand. On the way to the rich city of the Seljuk territory the Mongol army attacked many villages, but there were no massacres. The Mongols needed men for the army and enlisted many of them. When Samarkand fell, between May and June 1220, they conscripted ordinary people into the army, enslaved women and children and took the craftsmen with them.¹⁵⁶ Another example is after the conquest of Urgench, the capital of Khorazm: “Then they drove the population into the open country, and separated the artisans and workers from the others, who numbered more than a hundred thousand; the young women and children were enslaved and taken into captivity; and the men who remained were distributed so that every combatant in the army had to put twenty-four people to death [...]”. Then the army turned to looting and robbery, and destroyed what had remained of the houses and quarters. And further on: “when the Mongols had ended the battle of Khorazm and had done with leading captive, plundering, slaughter and bloodshed, such of the inhabitants as were artisans were divided up and sent to the countries of the East”.¹⁵⁷ Again, after entering Merv, in February 1221: “the Mongols ordered that, apart from four hundred artisans whom they specified and selected from amongst the men and some children, girls and boys, whom they bore into captivity, the whole population [...] should be killed, and no one [...] be spared”.¹⁵⁸

Before each battle, the Mongol generals sent forward men in advance, the *precursores* mentioned by Plano Carpini,¹⁵⁹ who had the task of observing and reporting the conditions in which the battle could take place, which potential enemies could dispose of and sometimes had the task (especially if it was to prepare for the siege of a city) to dissuade the inhabitants from resisting.¹⁶⁰ In the following paragraph, Plano Carpini offers a particular curiosity. He says that the Mongols forded the rivers using a light and round piece of leather tied tightly, inside which they put a few objects, and used it as a raft towed by the horse to which it was tied.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁵ Similar passages can be found in Juvaini I, 91–92, 127–28, 135 and 162.

¹⁵⁶ Juvaini I, 163–64.

¹⁵⁷ Juvaini I, 127–28.

¹⁵⁸ Juvaini I, 162.

¹⁵⁹ Giovanni di Pian del Carpine, *Historia Mongalorum* VI.11, 279.

¹⁶⁰ So it was for the conquest of Bukhara, Zhand, Merv, Urgench and other cities of Central Asia. See the first part of Juvaini.

¹⁶¹ This reference is also in *Encyclica contra Tartaros*: “Ipsi autem Tartari, sagittarii incomparabiles, utres ferunt artificialiter factos, quibus flumina transmeant indempnes rapacissima et paludes”; Giovanni di Pian del Carpine, *Historia Mongalorum*, 463. This system was anything but improvised. It is demonstrated by the fact that, for example, Herodotus and

TABLE 1 Mongol military and administrative structure

	XII–XIII Centuries	XIV–XVII Centuries
Ten <i>Arban</i>	Military unit made of 10 men	Disused
Hundred <i>Jaghun</i>	Military unit made of 100 men	Disused
Thousand <i>Mingghan</i>	Military unit made of 1,000 men	Term disappeared
<i>Tümen</i>	Military unit made of more than one <i>oboq</i>	Administrative unit, civil and military, made of 10,000 men

FROM BAT-OCHIR BOLD, *MONGOLIAN NOMADIC SOCIETY*

John Plano Carpini is also precise about the disposition of the army in battle. The Mongols attacked early with skirmishes carried out by archers on horseback that with extreme rapidity attacked and retreated to attract the enemy to a point where the bulk of the army lay. If the size of the opposing army allowed it, they would attack en masse; otherwise, they would flee until they lost their trail and then return to it by surprise. Plano Carpini observes that often, in order to seem more numerous, the Mongols used puppets placed on horses.¹⁶²

The Mongols avoided hand-to-hand combat. Horsemen's extraordinary ability with the bow made them prefer this weapon. When contact became inevitable, they used precise techniques. If the enemy were able to engage them during a battle, the Mongols would open ranks, letting the opponent go out and then chase him by attacking him on horseback.

Such military arrangement was only possible as a result of a series of well-constructed and rooted relations, clientele, and solidarity in the different clans, or ulus. The examination of the military organization shows how the *unagan bogol*, previously a visible and identifiable segment of the Mongol society, is now part of these relationships and disappears into the mesh of a more complex system. It is not uncommon to find commanders in the hundreds or thousands of second-generation descendants of the *unagan bogol*. These individuals could grow to the title of noyon. It increased social mobility,

Xenophon speak of a similar method for their times (see Niketas Choniates, *Grandezza e catastrofe* I, 582, n. 98).

162 Pian del Carpine, *Historia Mongalorum* VI.14, 281; albeit this method was used by the tribes also before the unification of early thirteenth century. The *Secret History* (VII.193, 163) mentions a similar stratagem during the war between Chinggis Khan and the Naimans.

but drastically reduced the freedom of the *nököd* and all the members of the military aristocracy; no one could change position without the appointment of Chinggis Khan, the supreme leader of the armed forces, who personally appoints the commanders of the *tümen*.¹⁶³

6 Nomadism and Slavery

Recalling some attitudes and the main currents of thought that have influenced, more or less directly, the attitude of men towards slavery in the Middle Ages may help address the conditions of servitude among the nomadic peoples, the understanding they had of this practice and the perception they had for enslaved individuals. Nevertheless, the investigation of slavery and the conception of enslavement among the nomads is very difficult to determine, mostly due to scarce documentary evidence.

In Ancient Roman times, a large part of production was founded upon slave labor. This was possible because agriculture was predominant. In a seminal study on medieval slavery, Marc Bloch rightly pointed out how much the transformation that took place in production, because of the general demographic, economic, and political decline in the fourth and fifth centuries, affected and partly changed the system of slave recruitment. “The slave is a bad worker”,¹⁶⁴ and the use of slave labor has considerable drawbacks, but if the political situation allowed easy recruitment, these problems did not arise. The bad worker or the rebel worker could be easily replaced. The complex Roman organizational system made great use of slaves because conquests proceeded rapidly, and successes occurred constantly, generating a constant influx of people where necessary. In this period there were no problems of price or quantity. In practice, the available labor force was more significant than the social and economic needs; supply was higher than demand. At the end of the Roman era, expansionism abruptly slowed down, accompanied by the extraordinary spread of Christianity, whose doctrinal system imposed a new reflection on the lawfulness of possessing slaves. Bloch wrote that “however [Christianity] favored manumission, it did not condemn slavery”.¹⁶⁵ Indeed, it imposed limits and forced the general reworking of the treatment received by a slave, but it never led to a clear and definitive condemnation of the practice.

¹⁶³ Vladimircov, *Le régime social*, 135.

¹⁶⁴ Bloch, “Comment et pourquoi,” 30–44 and 161–170. Here I have used the edition published in *La servitù nella società medievale*, 3–40 (at p. 9).

¹⁶⁵ Bloch, *Come e perché*, 31.

The slave trade had a considerable upsurge in Carolingian times,¹⁶⁶ but it was a period when it was not accurate to speak about slavery because ‘slaves’ were mainly servants. In the West, the difference was accentuated in the early medieval period. A deviation that coincides with the “dissolution of the old social hierarchies”.¹⁶⁷ Around the tenth century, the documentation began to use different words to designate the servile figures. The slave/object of the Roman era¹⁶⁸ progressively decreases and gives way to an individual of non-free condition, but not tied to his master by a bond of property. The slave as an object was almost exclusively a condition reserved for the foreigner.¹⁶⁹ In some areas of Western Europe, the general impoverishment caused by the decline of late Antiquity was accompanied by the need, on the part of the weaker classes, to find protection and means of subsistence adapted to face the new situation, and this was possible only by accepting to end up under wealthy owners and lords who had strong local roots. The number of slaves in this period was small, and this hinders the indiscriminate use of their services, which should not only be maintained but also controlled. The slave became a luxury commodity that not everyone could afford. The concept of serf was linked to the demographic aspect rather than a commercial and military one; servants were not available on the market, were not foreigners, born elsewhere, and coercively “imported” into a reality different from that of their origin. The serf reproduced himself in a social context that was the same as his master; from an economic point of view, a servant had to be able to produce as much as possible because not only did he have to generate an overproduction, but also had to be able to guarantee it to his master.

The service to which he was obliged was often constant, independent of the productivity he was able to provide (whether the land yielded much or little, the servant owed the master the same quantity of product). Rarely, therefore, was a servant able to accumulate reserves; most of the time, he

166 Milani, *La schiavitù*, 341.

167 Bloch, *Come e perché*, 31.

168 In fact, the designation of slave-object deserves a closer look. It is customary to use this semantic-cultural category applying it to that social context in which the individual was considered a tradable commodity and of which one could arbitrarily dispose. But we must emphasize that often, if not always, the law is far from the objective reality to which it refers; therefore, in a society like the Ancient Roman one, where the law had achieved extraordinary levels of sophistication, the slave-object was such only on a juridical level because it was required to do things that one would never have thought to ask of an object. The consideration of the slave as an individual because, biologically similar, the slave was also present in social contexts where he or she was treated, extrinsically as an object.

169 Bloch, *Come e perché*, 32. Here Bloch uses an anthropological category.

lived in a constant condition of debt to the master. Therefore, he had to control the growth of his offspring in order to avoid further impoverishment. All this made the serf an active demographic element but unfavorable to quantitative growth.¹⁷⁰ Finally, we can observe that if in a society based on the slave's activity, the production increased independently of labor productivity under the constant inflow of the workforce through recruitment (war and trade), with serfdom, it is the demographic factor that determines productivity. Demography is, in turn, influenced by productivity because the slave was substantially de-socialized,¹⁷¹ while the serf was an integral part of the social context that uses his labor.

As previously stated, the intervention of Christianity played a determinant role in the Western conception of slavery. The more or less rigid religious stances have influenced political thought and directed the attitude of individuals towards this practice, although the Church has never condemned it. The coming into play of the religious element as an identifier constitutes one of the distinguishing factors between the attitude of sedentary and nomadic societies towards the practice of slavery. The spread of Christianity in Europe accentuated the ethnic-confessional character of subjection. The strengthening of the collective identity based on the religious put the brakes on the enslavement of those like each other; in fact, cases in which Christians enslaved other Christians consistently decreased throughout the years.¹⁷² The Church had to readjust its doctrinal structure and sometimes rethink some aspects of it according to its lawfulness in the presence of individuals who possessed other individuals. Slavery and freedom were placed on the level of positive or negative values, good or bad, which God distributes according to principles that man cannot grasp or can simply attribute to merits and faults for which he is unable to establish the origin. As Piero Milani rightly pointed out, the difference brought about by Christianity and scholasticism, in particular, was hope.¹⁷³ The hope of redemption is an eschatological vision of the human condition and of divine justice that anticipates the dissolution of the present condition. Since ancient times (Stoicism, Seneca, the first jurists of the Christian era and the Fathers of the Church), the idea of natural freedom has been the subject of careful and complex reflections.

170 See the thorough analysis offered by Meillassoux: *Anthropology*, especially ch. 4, 85–98.

171 I borrowed the concept of *desocialization* from anthropology because it seemed pertinent here. Simplifying a very complex aspect, we could say that a slave is de-socialized when he is taken away from his social environment and included in a new one in which he remains socially marginalized. (Meillassoux, *Antropologia*, 88 and 104–05).

172 Milani, *La schiavitù*, 344–45; Verlinden, *L'esclavage* 1, 122 and 137–38.

173 Milani, *La schiavitù*, 346.

However, as we have pointed out, no one questioned the legitimacy of the principle of slavery; no intellectuals, religious or laypeople, came to positions condemning the practice and those who practiced it. The Roman Church was not the only one to intervene on the subject. In Caucasia, the Georgian Church repeatedly and harshly condemned the slave trade, imposing severe penalties on those who practiced it. In the code of laws promulgated by King Vakhang, there was a threat of excommunication for those who sold Christian slaves to Muslim merchants.¹⁷⁴

We have seen above that before the unification accomplished by Chinggis Khan, the collective exploitation of natural resources and the following grouping of several clans in nearby areas, was the most widespread socioeconomic model. However, at the beginning of the thirteenth century, the growing social stratification made the system of relations within the clan even more dynamic. The *oboq* was a reality in continuous movement, and its physiognomy changed rapidly. The family community was perceived as “open”, but it was not so open in reality. In a patrilinear model, the discrimination between productive and nonproductive individuals had to do mainly with the intrinsic characteristics of the person rather than his social status. In order to increase the demographic entity of the clan and, more generally, guarantee continuity to it, an opening towards the outside world was necessary. In small communities, as were the proto-mongol families, it was increasingly difficult to maintain an acceptable balance between productive and unproductive elements; this is one reason behind the natural propensity of nomadism for war. The blood-tie was important, but also the voluntary acquisition of external alliances had a considerable weight (the figure of the *quda* is an example). To the blood-ties were added those of sworn friendship (the figure of the *anda*). The birth of these structures and the strengthening of extra-familial ties advanced in the decades following the unification.

The *Secret History* is rich in episodes of this kind and shows the ever-increasing number of adoptions – at the turn of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries – of young people belonging to clans defeated by those who prevailed in the wars.¹⁷⁵ However, the adoptions did not allow the new members of the

174 Allen, *A History of Georgian People* cit., p. 286. In fact, most of these measures remained on paper and were rarely applied.

175 SSM, I, 14, p. 52: “Dobun Mergen went on, carrying the three-year-old deer on the back of his horse. On the way he met a poor man on foot who was leading his son by the hand”. The man traded his son for game. The *Secret History* continues saying that “[Dobun] took the child to be a servant in his house”: SSM, I, 16, p. 54. In SSM, III, 97, p. 83 and old man says to a young Temüjin “I also gave you this son of mine [...] because you, Temüjin, command him to saddle the horse, because you command him to open the door”. Again

oboq to benefit from all the material rights enjoyed by the original members (first and foremost, the pastures inherited from the clan itself). Instead, they obtained protection from the clan: a vital privilege in the context of the long-lasting conflict that prevailed in the territories occupied by the Turco-Mongol nomadism in the second half of the twelfth century. Within an extremely fluid context, it was not uncommon for members of the same clan to spend time in opposing camps and fight each other.

Insecurity was not only an external condition; brutal conflicts could explode even within the clans themselves, leading to the breaking of blood relations and all the more reason for sworn brotherhood.¹⁷⁶ For the same reason the number of potentially submissible people was continually increasing, and many elements of the Chinggisid army, when the Khan reorganized it, belonged to defeated and enslaved clan members. However, some distinctions are necessary in order to understand how the Mongols' and nomadic societies thought of serfdom in general. There were different degrees of servitude and not all of them were final. Also, in this case, the Mongol conquest and the commercial expansion of Italian cities in the East – from the second half of the thirteenth century – brought together two different ways of conceiving the utility of the subjugated individual.

In traditional Mongol society, the concept of freedom was closely related to that of *oboq*, i.e., kinship assumed great importance. Free men were born and raised within the community, while those who came from a different, external social environment were foreigners.¹⁷⁷ The superimposition of categories, though valid for western society, that seek to explain phenomena endogenous to the nomadic reality in the Middle Ages is therefore not entirely practicable. As we said above, the social context of the proto-Mongol communities was devoid of a rigid stratification. The social dynamics of these communities depended on the internal redistribution of wealth and that overproduction be absent or minimal. Therefore, although forms of enslavement existed, we cannot speak of slaves nor serfs, and we cannot consider the early Mongol society as a slave owning society.

In traditional Mongol society, those who had fallen into a state of dependence generally constituted the *Qarachu* (literally *black ones*). For them, social mobility was possible even before Temüjin unified the Turco-Mongol peoples.

“in the abandoned camp of the Tayčiud and Besüd our people picked up a child named Kōköčü and brought him to his mother Höelün, and she took him to raise him”, SSM, III, 120, p. 97; examples could continue.

176 RaD I. 52; SSM III.104, 87–88 and 105; III.116, 95; V.150, 122.

177 Meillassoux, *Anthropology*, 169.

When the collective exploitation of natural resources was the prevailed, the *oboqs* lived together and shared many aspects of everyday life. Further fragmentation of the clans could be voluntary, but also imposed. When the latter was the case, altered ties were created and determined by prevarication. So, a winning *oboq* could decide what fate to reserve for the defeated. Generally, people tended to use the victorious nucleus as a new sap for their clan by incorporating themselves into it. At that time, the incorporated individuals became foreigners, but there was no de-socialization.

In the written sources, the word used for entirely subjugated individuals or groups is *bogol*. Soviet historiography has often seen in *bogol* slaves subjugated and forced to participate in the production process under the bond of serfdom, but the sources seem not to allow this equation. Berezin's translation of the word *bogol* (*bool*) with the Russian *rab* (i.e., slave) generated a set of misunderstandings from which there has often been an attempt to bend the facts to a mechanistic conception of traditional nomadic society that assumes the figure of the slave or servant should necessarily exist in the same sense that this word acquires for Europe of the mid and late Middle Ages. *Bogol* never appears as subject to a master, and it never appears to be the property of another individual. The dynamics that led to subjugation were of a different kind. Often the need to receive protection prevailed in exchange for providing a service. A passage in the *Secret History* reads: "Then the brothers [of the lineage of Chinggis], in five, took prisoners all those men [of the Jarčut tribe] who became their servants and slaves, and worked with the herds and in the kitchen".¹⁷⁸ The individuals incorporated into the dominant clans became part of the productive process and occupied tasks that were no different from those carried out by members of that same clan. Constraints were born, which did not materialize through the arbitrary availability of an individual. The dominant character of these ties was voluntary fidelity and the need to remain in strong clans, capable of ensuring protection to the weak elements and their only wealth, the livestock. The bond was seldom officially sanctioned and could be broken with ease. So much so that having *bogol* was a privilege reserved for a few individuals.

If in the thirteenth century, the use of domestic servants was relatively widespread in Western Europe and common in sedentary societies on the whole, the Mongols continued to own 'collective' servants. We may find a similar characteristic in the earliest Georgian communities. In the first centuries of the Christian era, Georgian social stratification was a phenomenon in slow progression. Only the members of the dominant class – the *gwari* – were authorized to keep servants. In any case, even in the Georgian *sagwareulo*

¹⁷⁸ SSM, I, 39, p. 59.

system, slaves were the property of the *gwari* and part of it to all intents and purposes, providing services like those of the Mongol *bogol*.¹⁷⁹

The figure of the *bogol* has often been discussed in the context of the scientific literature on the *unagan bogol* (*ütegu bogol*, *ongu bogol*, *ütele bogol*) which Vladimircov translated as “vassal serfs”.¹⁸⁰ The *unagan bogol* was not a very different figure from the *bogol*. The term does not appear in the *Secret History*, but Berezin used it in his Russian translation of Rashid ad-Din’s *Summa*,¹⁸¹ he was most likely a kind of vassal, a faithful servant forced into obedience because he was free, but a descendant of *bogol*,¹⁸² a later condition and perhaps characterized by a more labile bond with the dominant clan. Rashid ad-Din talks about it in part because at the time of his writing there were people who, coming from humble origins, had managed to improve their station and to occupy prominent roles in society, but only in a social – no longer traditional – context. This coming from the point of view of a Persian official of the thirteenth century. The two words designate a similar condition within traditional Mongolian society, with the difference that the *unagan bogol* came to have a closer bond with one individual rather than belonging to an entire *oboq*.

In exchange for their service, the *bogol* received what they needed for their subsistence. They could not break this bond on their initiative. Even *unagan bogols* – if we accept that they were different from *bogol* because they were released, i.e., freed – were different from what is usually associated with the concept of a medieval servant or classical slave. The written sources generally speak of them as belonging to defeated tribes and forced to serve among the prevailing ones. They were dependent, like a slave, but with substantial differences. First, in this period, they were not subject to a single master. The *bogol* was at the disposal of the whole *oboq* or a part of it¹⁸³ (a family) even if he (or she) was not considered property to all intents and purposes: it almost always kept its goods,¹⁸⁴ it did not owe the totality of its work to the clan he was assigned; its service consisted principally in the typical tasks of nomadic

179 See Allen, *A History of the Georgian People* cit., pp. 221–225.

180 Vladimircov, *Le régime social* cit., p. 78 e segg.

181 It is a variant of the Mongol term *ütegu*, i.e. separate, released. The edition of Berezin’s monumental work was published over thirty years in Sankt Peterburg: I.N. Berezin, *Trudy Vostochnogo Otdelenija Imperatorskago Archeologicheskago Obshchestva*, Sankt Peterburg 1858–1888, in this case: *Sbornik letopisej. Istorija Mongolov sochinenie Rashid-Eddina*, voll. V, VII, XIII.

182 Bold, *Mongolian nomadic Society*, 115.

183 For example, when the Mongols defeated the Merkits, they “took all the women and all the children. They destroyed the sacred shelters and captured all the *ulus*”, SSM III.109, 91.

184 According to RaD (III, 126) part of the people Žalair was already *unagan bogol* of the Borižigin clan. A member of this clan lived independently of the clan itself and with horses owned by him; see on this also Vladimircov, *Le régime social*, 84.

production: taking animals to pasture, following transhumance, cooking and above all serving its *oboq* in wartime by providing military services. They fundamentally, therefore, maintained relative personal liberty.¹⁸⁵ It was precisely thanks to their military performance that this category of person was able to raise their social status. Social mobility was not a recurrent fact according to the sources, but the *noyons* had possibilities that others did not; exclusive prerogatives resulting from the role they occupied as armed clientele of the Khan and often they could entrust tasks of high responsibility to the *bogol*. The nomadic economy was too un-diversified for there to be social strata systematically involved in the production process.

In an address to an elder of Chinggis Khan's ulus, *Usun*, says: "there is a tradition among us Mongols of raising to the dignity of *noyon*, of *beki*, those who deserve it". The Khan could raise to the dignity of *noyon* the *bogols* who had distinguished themselves for their loyalty and courage in battle.¹⁸⁶ The position occupied by the *bogol* within Mongol society between the twelfth and thirteenth centuries probably depended on the condition of the *oboq* to which it was subject. It was rather usual that the whole *oboqs* were subject to the bond of subjugation.¹⁸⁷ The condition of the *unagan bogol* was hereditary.¹⁸⁸ In this regard, a passage from the *Secret History* is emblematic; after the defeat of the Kherait and the subsequent division of the loot by the victorious Mongols, a member of the Žirgin tribe named Qadag Bagatur managed to make his lord, the Van khan of the Kherait, escape. Temüjin admired the courage of this man, who by risking his own life, had managed to save his lord. Temüjin pardoned him and established that "Qadag Bagatur and a hundred Žirgin serve his family" (of Quyildar, a Mongol who died in the battle against the Keraites). "And let their sons be servants of the sons and grandsons of Quyildar. And the Žirgin parents will not be able to marry their daughters to whomever they wish. Let them be servants of the members of Quyildar's family, preceding and accompanying them".¹⁸⁹

185 Ibid., 80.

186 For instance in SSM IX.212, 187–88; e in particular *ibid.*, 191. This episode is reported in *ibid.*, IX.219, 193. Courage and loyalty were fundamental qualities to gain the favour of Khan. Besides a rapid social rise, these merits determined concessions of various kinds. It could have been the attribution of a good wife or a group of *bogol* (*ibid.*, VIII.208, 185), but also a space for grazing (*ibid.*, IX.219, 192).

187 *Ibid.*, III.137–39, 109–10.

188 Vladimircov, *Le régime social*, 82–83; SSM III.137, 109; *ibid.*, III.139, 110; *ibid.*, V.154, 126; *ibid.*, VII.186, 155.

189 *Ibid.*, VI.185, 154.

There were often marital unions between dominant and enslaved clans that could change the latter's social status by raising it. In fact, it is not uncommon to find in the written sources' hints of *bogol* clans whose economic conditions were relatively good.¹⁹⁰ The *unagan bogol* was a unit whose composition was combined and could be part of the clan's dominant class but also socially weaker groups. In the first case, their condition was better; in the second, they performed more humble tasks, but always remaining owners of those goods closely related to their labor (livestock and tools for grazing and kumys making). As mentioned above, the defeat of entire tribes could coincide with their subjugation; for example, after overcoming the Kheraits, Chinggis Khan turned to his partisans and "distributed among all the Kherait prisoners in quantity. The *tümen* of the Tübegen was distributed to the last man".¹⁹¹

After the conquest, however, things changed somewhat. With the intensification of the conquests and, therefore of the clashes between tribes, at the end of the twelfth century, there was a change in the condition of the *bogol*: an increased individuality in servile practice also accompanied the transition from a collective organization of society to a more individual one – the figure of the *bogol* becomes less recurrent in sources to the benefit of the servants of one master. Alongside them, in the *Secret History* and Rashid ad-Din's *Summa*, another figure appears: that of the *inžä*, i.e., house servants; individuals who lent their work to other individuals in their homes. They could even enter the dowry of young women.¹⁹² The *bogol* could be freed by becoming *darqan*.¹⁹³ The emergence of these new figures is the result of several factors among which it is worth remembering the demographic increase generated by the conquests of Chinggis Khan, the growth of Mongols through the absorption of rival groups and, as we said above, the incorporation of a sedentary reality whose effect was mainly the consolidation of social stratification.

Therefore, the traditional Mongol society cannot be considered a slave system, meaning that it systematically resorts to slave labor, rather than serfdom, to satisfy its production needs. There was no set of functions performed institutionally by a class of individuals and in such a permanent way as to allow an exploitative class to have guaranteed specific tasks and thus gain freedom from them.

190 Vladimircov, *Le régime social*, 84; RaD I, 169–70 and III, 126.

191 SSM VII.187, 156.

192 Vladimircov, *Le régime social* cit., p. 85; RaD, I, p. 194.

193 "Qulan-Bagatur had a son, Yeke-Čeren, who was the *noyon* of Badai and Kišlig, *darqan*, that is, emancipated servants", SSM, I, 51, p. 62.

The encounter between two such different conceptions of enslavement – on the one hand, the “absent” slaves of traditional Mongol society and the commercial ideology of the urban merchant class – produced very interesting results for the scholar. The slave trade has directly affected the Caucasus and has had by no means negligible consequences for the people. In the spatial sphere of the vast Mongol Empire, the commercial function exercised by the Muslim merchants of Turkestan and the regions under Ilkhanid rule was decisive in the increase in slave trading. Islam had, and before it encountered the Mongols, created the social conditions necessary for the development of an individualistic economy aimed at the realization of profit.¹⁹⁴ The class society in which the slave is a totally de-socialized and sometimes desexualized individual was a consolidated reality on the eve of the Mongol invasion. New rulers had to confront these aspects when consolidating power.

From the earliest decades of the thirteenth century onwards, political events favored the recruitment of people in this region and the efficiency with which Western and Middle Eastern merchants dealt with the traffic was remarkable. In the thirteenth century, the steady demographic growth of most European cities and generalized economic development were almost contemporary with the Mongol invasions in the East. The flourishing slave trade in the Balkans,¹⁹⁵ where Venice was the leading agent, was compounded by the eastern trade so much that the Black Sea became the most fruitful recruitment basin of the time.¹⁹⁶ Slave trade always created the most significant supply in the areas immediately surrounding places of recruitment. On the other hand, slavery originates in a commercial environment because slaves are exchanged along with the objects of their labor. However, it has always had, even in Western Europe, a close link with political and military events. After the victorious crusaders dominated in the East, for example, the number of Saracen slaves became a constant presence in Italian (along with other countries) slave markets.¹⁹⁷ The Venetian and above all Genoese penetration into the Black Sea, from the second half of the thirteenth century, changed this state of affairs

194 Meillassoux, *Antopologia* cit., p. 236.

195 Balard, *La Romanie génoise* cit., pp. 797–798.

196 The slave trade thrived especially from the second half of the thirteenth century and was largely fueled by constant demand in Mamluk Egypt. Collateral to the sale of young males to join the Egyptian military ranks was the trade in girls, often sisters of young men destined for the Mamluk army, who were employed in European cities as domestic servants. See on this Cluse and Amitai, *Slavery and the Slave Trade*, esp. pp. 19–24 and the second part, 187–234. See also the thorough study of H. Barker, *That most precious merchandise*. L. Pubblici, “Some Remarks,” 566–77. Still fundamental, albeit old, remains, Verlinden, *L’esclavage*.

197 Gioffrè, *Il mercato degli schiavi*, 13.

so much so that Tartar slaves became the most numerous.¹⁹⁸ In addition to this situation, the growing western cities needed a new workforce, merchants had increased financial resources, and add to this the unique situation in Egypt, where the Mamluks were nothing more than “intruders” who provided armed protection to the population in exchange for real maintenance. They were Turks in an Arab country and needed a labor force both for the army and production. The Mamluks controlled most of the Middle Eastern markets of the time: Beirut, Damascus, Alexandria, and Cairo. Therefore, a commercial network developed so that Western merchants, Venetians, and Genoese, used their emporia on the Black Sea to buy slaves and resell them to the Mamluks. In this way, they could secure the goodwill of the Turkic sultans, frequent the south-eastern ports, and keep the volume of their trade high.

The augmented range of trade, the extension of the merchants’ presence far from home, the integration of regional economies into a common, *supranational* commercial space, were all factors that changed structurally the Eurasian political and economic culture. Most of this “new course” was the consequence of the Mongol conquest, a disruptive event for its intensity and extension. A new geography emerged from the military campaigns of Chinggis and his successors. The Caucasus, once more, became the frontier, a hinge between Asia and Europe, a contact zone between cultures.

198 Western intervention in the slave trade in the Levant markets dates to well before the thirteenth century, but until this period it did not assume significant dimensions; Pubblici, “Some Remarks,” 570; Amitai, “Diplomacy and Slave Trade,” 349–68; Balard, *La Romanie g noise*, 289.

A New Geography: The Mongol Expansion in the Caucasus and the Azov Basin

1 Overview

The figure of Chinggis Khan has always evoked strong reactions from people.¹ His contemporaries often had contradictory perceptions of him, determined by the myth of the great conquests made with a rapidity and effectiveness that left his opponents stunned, together with the ferocity that followed and often preceded his military actions. Even historians have dwelt on the legendary aspect of the Khan, sometimes exalting his qualities as a leader, sometimes barely scraping the surface of his military or soldiering characteristics. In the last two decades, the figure of the Mongol emperor has been approached with more rigor, attentive to the reality presented by the written sources. The result is a very complex picture in which dominant characteristics seems to be the skill of a politician, capable of using the means at his disposal to achieve objectives often planned with maniacal attention. However, his most complex enterprise, the unification of the Turco-Mongol tribes, was mostly due to pre-existing conditions. Chinggis Khan's work did not change the substance of any social balance in the twenty years that followed his conquests; if anything, it laid the foundations for the developments that occurred after his death and accelerated processes already underway. He limited himself to keeping up the scaffolding based on nomadism's ancient tribal physiognomy, in which the *oboq* was the substantially organized core. In the first years of the empire, his action resulted in the imposition of this organizational model on a considerably enlarged number of tribes, a result of his conquests, which were now part of a single great imperial ulus. Therefore, they were tied by a bond of belonging to the Khan; the eminent personages of every single clan/*oboq*, the *noyons*, were, on the other hand, tied to the Great Khan by a bond of loyalty that, as we have seen, foresaw the service rendered in the form of armed clientele. In this sense, Chinggis introduced a novel element: the loyalty of the nomadic aristocracy was strengthened and directed towards the figure

1 The most complete monograph on Chinggis Khan today is still Ratchnevsky, *Cinggis-Khan, Sein Leben und Wirken*, Wiesbaden 1983, translated into English (*Genghis Khan: His Life and Legacy*). For the other essays dedicated to Chinggis Khan see the bibliographical apparatus.

of the *emperor*. In practice, the social framework became more stable, a sign of a hierarchy with a rigidity that could only be loosened by the Khan's measures. At the same time, all the ties that united the lower strata of the social structure remained intact. Chinggis proceeded to a general reorganization that affected every component of the new political system; the indisputable ability with which he was endowed allowed him to quickly understand that, only by using this new and increased strength as one vast organism, in solidarity with the life of the empire and the composition of the army, could he make the most of its potential. He was able to end the continuous struggles between the Turco-Mongol tribes, guaranteeing a new, though relative, security in the steppe.

The vast organism that he created outlived him and grew with his immediate successors, his sons, but entered into crisis by the third generation due to a series of circumstances that are not entirely within the scope of our investigation and would deserve a monograph of their own.² In extreme synthesis, and to take up what we mentioned in the previous chapter, one of the reasons lies precisely in the very origin of the Chinggisid Mongols: the fact that they were an imposed unitary entity, the result of pressing needs much more than of solid ideological and cultural integration. Moreover, the succession within the clan followed a distributive logic that tended to crumble. In other words, the Mongol Empire was born divided. Every son of the Khan (whether a brother, a cousin, an uncle, or anyone who enjoyed the esteem of the Khan himself) inherited a portion of his father's territory according to the succession.³ The most obvious consequence of the fragmentation that occurred a few years after the death of the Khan was the division of the empire into different parts, all directly dependent on the Great Khan (which at the death of Chinggis was Ögedei, the third son and not the firstborn Jochi, r. 1229–1241). This dependence on the “central” seat soon turned out to be purely nominal, so much so that the peripheral ulus obtained a significant degree of separation by establishing independent states that developed autonomously from the original and unitary project of Chinggis Khan. All this did not change the substance of the conquests. The so-called Mongol peace (*Pax Mongolica*) created new

2 The dissolution of the Mongol Empire is a debated topic, and some of the most prominent specialists have investigated it. For the several hypotheses considered, see Jackson, “The dissolution” and Morgan, “The decline and fall”.

3 As we have seen in the previous chapter, the eldest son inherited the portion of ulus furthest from the field where the *oboq* of origin lived; the latter belonged to his younger son, the guardian of the hearth. The other children had no predetermined rights, it depended on the will of the father.

conditions for Eurasia to become open and safer for merchants, diplomats, and travelers in general.⁴

Although the concept of *Pax Mongolica* is challenged today, and not without good arguments, the creation of a huge, politically homogeneous, and connected space since the second half of the thirteenth century allowed western travelers to go as far as China. The powerful commercial machine of Italian maritime cities pushed as far as the Caspian Sea, Russia, Persia, and, even if rarely directly, China, drawing exceptional profits and establishing stable, reliable, and well-organized emporia in those regions. If the Fourth Crusade had, on the one hand, knocked down the Byzantine “obstacle”, the Mongol conquests had paved the way for the Far East. In the first thirty years of the thirteenth century, a new political context arose.

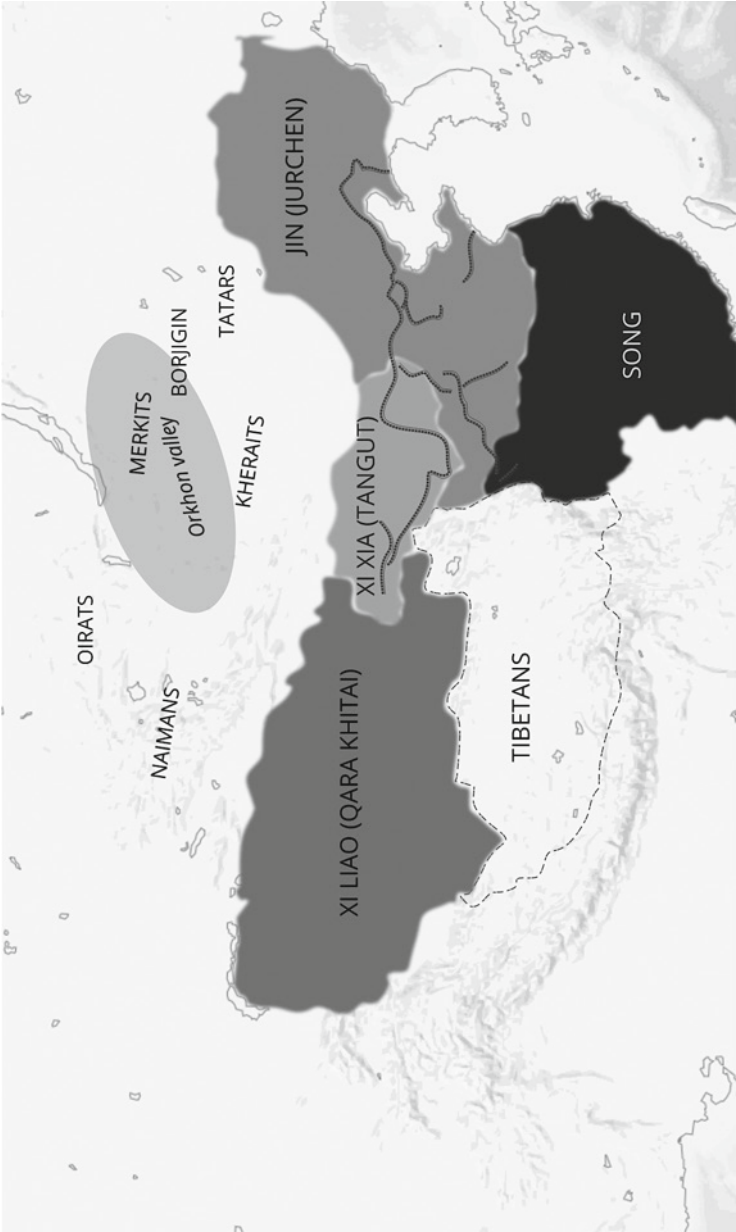
The pace of the Mongol conquests was impressive and unprecedented. The consequences of the vast military campaigns gave rise to a broad territorial and political reorganization process that involved wide spaces in different ways. The new arrangement of the territories conquered by the Mongols, from the Caucasus to the Azov Sea, was the result of a process apparently rapid from the standpoint of chronology, but in substance was rather long and complex. The aristocracy of the conquered states, from central power to peripheral feudality, had to accept the new domination and in many cases adapted to it. But if the latter had immediate consequences from a political point of view, there was never, on the other hand, any real cultural assimilation. These are complex aspects, which deserve to be treated chronologically.

2 Times and Ways of the Western Invasion

The first expedition promoted and carried out by the ulus of Chinggis Khan outside the Mongol steppe was – at the beginning of the thirteenth century – against China, which at the time was divided into three different states. In the northwest, the Xi Xia (whose Tangut dynasty was ruling from 1038), in the north, the Empire of the Jurchen Jin dynasty, and in the south the Sung Empire.⁵

4 On the concept of *Pax Mongolica* and its implications see Allsen, *Culture and Conquest*, 40–45; Di Cosmo, “Black Sea Emporia,” 88–91; Di Cosmo, “Mongols and Merchants,” 391–424. See also May, *The Mongol conquests*, 109–29.

5 Di Cosmo, *Ancient China and Hoàng, Gengis Khan*, 177; Grousset, *L'empire des steppes*, 243–73; Bartold, *Turkestan*, 381–84.



MAP 5.1 China and the northern frontier in the late 12th century

In a relatively short time, the Mongols conquered the entire Chinese territory north and south of the Great Wall. In April 1214, the siege began in Beijing, the capital of the Jin Empire, which fell the following year, June 1215. Following the conquest in the East, the Mongol army engaged against the Khorazm-Shah,⁶ first Muhammad II (r. 1200–1220) and later his son, Jalal ud-Din (r. 1220–1231). Both, after a long chase, were overwhelmed by the Mongols.

In the past few years, scholars have insisted on the role of the campaign against the Khorazm-Shah as the main pretext for the advance to the West. The Mongols were attracted to urban civilization (it was alien to their tradition, and they had a certain distrust towards certain aspects of it) for its productive potential. In fact, the conquest of China earned Chinggis Khan considerable fame even beyond the borders of his *ulus*.⁷ China was a country where widespread wealth was a strong attraction for the Muslim rulers of the Khorazm, and the news that the Mongols had managed to conquer it, must have made a deep impression on them. The written sources mention that an ambassador was sent by the Khorazm-Shah in late 1215.⁸ Chinggis Khan received the messengers with many expectations because he believed that the Sultan recognized his authority as a result of his military achievements. In practice, he wanted the Sultan, as a prestigious leader of the East, to swear allegiance to him and to rule under his protection.⁹ As a skilled politician, Chinggis Khan realized perfectly well how important it was to ensure unity for as many territories as possible. Belonging to a nomadic culture and strongly linked to it, he understood how productive a close connection with sedentary economies could be and how useful their production was for his people. Cloth and wheat were products the Mongols appreciated and were not able to produce, as well as wine.¹⁰ In the lands of Turkestan, where a prosperous sedentary economy

6 The Khorazmian Empire was born from the rebellion of the Seljuks in 1138 and soon expanded on the western bank of the Oxus. At the eve of the Mongol invasion – in 1218 – the Empire extended on Iran and Turkestan, and its capital was the city of Urgench. Atwood, *Encyclopedia*, 306–08.

7 Bartold, *Turkestan*, 393.

8 Ibid., 393–94. It is on this occasion that the Persian historian Juzjani (1193–ca. 1265) describes the scenes of devastation that were “everywhere visible” at the gates of Beijing from the walls of which “the young women threw themselves at each other to escape the fury of the Mongols”. On the Mongol campaigns, see May, *The Mongol Conquests*, 27–58.

9 Part of the traditional Mongolian ideological system was the belief that the Khan, invested by Heaven (*Tenggri*), should rule the world and place the antagonistic sovereigns under his protection. See Golden’s already quoted essay on this, *Imperial Ideology* and Allsen, *Mongol Imperialism*.

10 “In the latter part of his reign he had brought about complete peace and quiet, and security and tranquility, and had achieved the extreme of prosperity and well-being; the roads

was a well-established reality, merchants made huge profits from trade with neighboring countries, in Rus' and Anatolia, in particular. However, payments often included postponements so that any conflict or impediment risked causing enormous damage to the merchants themselves. For example, the Seljuk expedition against the Empire of Trebizond in the early thirteenth century caused the failure of many merchants.¹¹ The same happened during the first Mongol incursion into Caucasia and the subsequent battle against prince Mstislavl of Chernigov.¹²

In the early thirteenth century, the Muslim merchants of Turkestan managed a busy trade relationship with China, and the Mongol conquest of 1214–15 had alarmed the Sultan, who probably feared a tightening of relations with the Orient. Therefore, it was possible that Chinggis had no intention of waging war against the Sultan and, on the contrary, preferred to keep the roads connecting the territories to Khorazm safe. At this point, it was a matter of verifying what margin of negotiation existed for the Sultan to accept a peaceful settlement aimed at securing the territories which, at this point, would constitute a considerable expansion: from China to the Caspian Sea. The peace to which Chinggis aspired had to end on his terms. However, Juvaini writes that all the contemporary historians viewed the Sultan as responsible for having attracted the Mongol wrath and having thus, albeit indirectly, promoted the destruction of the countries they conquered. According to Juvaini, three Muslim merchants (of whom he provides the name and the merchandise they carried: gold-embroidered fabrics, cottons, *zandanichi*) went to the Mongol territories to trade.¹³ When they arrived at the border, the guards who were in charge of controlling the incoming goods realized the high quality of what the merchants were carrying and sent them directly to the Khan, as he had ordered. In those years, Chinggis Khan had promulgated a *yasa* (a law) granting full immunity to merchants who intended to travel to the territories under his command.¹⁴

Chinggis much appreciated the merchandise the merchants brought, adequately paid for it, and sent them back together with merchants from his territories to bring a message of peace to the Sultan. This initiative – we cannot

were secure and disturbances allayed: so that wherever profit or gain was displayed, in the uttermost West of the farthestmost East, thither merchants would bend their steps". (Juvaini I, 77).

11 Ibn al-Athir II, 395.

12 Ibid., 457–60.

13 Juvaini I, 77–78. The *zandanichi* are fabrics of Zandana, a village near Bukhara.

14 On some of the *yasa* proclaimed by Chinggis Khan see Bar Hebraeus, *Chronicon*, 412; Spuler, *History of the Mongols*, 40–41.

verify all aspects of it – had a tragic outcome in Otrar, on the eastern border of the Khorazmian territory. According to Ibn al-Athir and Juvaini,¹⁵ Chinggis Khan was nevertheless satisfied with the diplomatic result. In the same year, 1218, the caravan of merchants from Mongolia arrived in Otrar. The governor of the city suspected the merchants of being spies. There is no precise data on the dynamics of the events, i.e., whether it was the governor or the Sultan himself who decided the fate of the merchants. What is certain is that they were massacred and their goods seized.

According to Juvaini, the entire caravan died on this occasion except for one who reported the news to Chinggis.¹⁶ The Khan's reaction can be considered mild as he only sent three people to the Sultan to ask for an explanation and have the governor of Otrar held responsible for the events.¹⁷ The Sultan's response was quite explicit: the three ambassadors were executed.¹⁸ The *casus belli* was created, and the invasion of the Khorazm "justifiable" (assuming Chinggis Khan was interested in having a justification for waging war against someone). Bartold argues¹⁹ that at first, Chinggis had a high regard for the Sultan's military capabilities and his army; he did not want to start a war whose outcome he could not have foreseen. From this point of view, the Mongols were very shrewd; they never embarked on blind military campaigns. They always gathered accurate information by making a detailed search of the territories in which they were to fight, and it can't be ruled out that the embassies sent in 1218 also had this purpose. The fact remains that the killing of the merchants and the subsequent elimination of the ambassadors legitimized military intervention against the Sultan. Juvaini, Ibn al-Athir and Nasawi, are precise in indicating the timing and ways of the invasion to the West by the Mongolian army. Without making a chronicle of the conquests, I think it is useful to solidify some points that can clarify the subsequent events that took place in the Caucasian region.

15 Bartold, *Turkestan*, cit. p. 398; Juvaini, cit. I, 79–81. See also, Ayalon, "The Great Yasa," 97–140; Morgan, "The Great Yasa," 163–76.

16 "Before this order had arrived [the murder of all merchants], one of the merchants devised a stratagem and escaped from the straits of prison" (Juvaini I, 80); Bartold, *Turkestan*, 399. Given the dynamic narrated by the Persian historian, it is likely that he did not know the facts in detail and fabricated the story of the only survivor who could personally report the news to Chinggis Khan. Notwithstanding this, the massacre of the merchants in Otrar is confirmed by other reliable sources (from this point of view Juvaini is undoubtedly so too) for which see Bartold, Russian edition, vol. I.

17 Juvaini I, 81–82.

18 Nasawi, 60–61.

19 Bartold, *Turkestan*, 396–97. May, *The Mongol conquests*, 43; Sounders, *The History*, 55.

3 In Pursue of the Sultan: The First Campaign against the Khorazm-Shah and the Invasion of Turkestan

In the summer of 1219, the Mongol army gathered on the Irtysh, ready to wage war against the Khorazm-Shah.²⁰ In the autumn of the same year, Chinggis Khan also arrived in the region and stopped in Qayaligh.²¹ Studies have shown that the Mongol army was, at this time, smaller in number than the Khorazmian.²² One of the weaknesses of the armies that faced the Mongols were the former's low unity compared to the formidable compactness of the latter. Written sources often indicate the ruling classes of the attacked centers as responsible for this. Nevertheless, in these years, the Sultan's army could only be divided and fragmented. It was the result of an emergency in which the local aristocracy, atabeg, vizir, and emirs, had accepted Mohammad's leadership only because they were seriously concerned about the Mongol advance. The Sultan's militia was led by members of those eminent classes who ruled in total autonomy in the cities of Turkestan and Transoxiana. Now, this autonomy was frozen without any guarantee of its future restoration. They could not recognize any consolidated authority to the Sultan; besides this, there are reports, especially in Juvaini, of low esteem, on the part of the Muslim generals, for the military capabilities of the Sultan himself.²³ Finally, when the Khorazmian Shah had imposed his sovereignty on Transoxiana's states, he pursued a policy that would have proved disastrous for the fate of the Sultanates. He imposed higher tributes on the population without ever succeeding in obtaining important victories that could justify such levies. Nasawi maintains that after the execution of the Mongol ambassadors, the Sultan ran to safety in a completely uncoordinated manner: "The first measure that [the Sultan] thought he would take in these critical circumstances [...] was to surround, despite its immensity, the city of Samarkand with walls whose development, as far as we know,

20 Juvaini I, 88; Grousset, *L'empire des steppes*, 298–99.

21 Qayaligh, southeast of Lake Balkhash, today on the border between eastern Kazakhstan and China, was in the hands of the Qarluc Turks. Arslan, who reigned there, asked Chinggis Khan for recognition as a vassal and obtained it (Juvaini I, 95–97); likewise, the king of the Uighurs Bartchuq and the governor of Almaligh, "the most important city in the region" joined the Mongol army, accepting the bond of submission (Juvaini I, 95).

22 Sounders, *The History*, 55–56; May, *The Mongol Conquests*, 112–13; Bartold, *Turkestan*, 404; Grousset, *L'empire des steppes*, 299. Bartold and Grousset give the figures of circa 150–200,000 men. It is important to stress that the Mongol army was not made of just Mongols, but included many peoples more or less forcibly recruited in the conquered lands. See Jackson, *The Mongols in the Islamic World*, 6.

23 This is a point on which Bartold (Bartold, *Turkestan*, 404–06) insisted a lot (Nasawi, 61). Juvaini also mentions it (Juvaini I, 123–24).

should have been 12 *farsakhs*,²⁴ and to install a stable garrison there”.²⁵ Again, the second measure taken by the Sultan was to send new officials to collect taxes (the third time in the same year) and men to be trained as archers;²⁶ the situation became so tense that the nobles of Baghdad, led by the prince of the city an-Nasir li-Din-Allah, deployed them against the army without success.²⁷

The lack of coordination resulted in military resources being too spread out through the territory. Instead of opposing the Mongols by concentrating their forces in strategic cities, the Sultan's generals settled with the bulk of the army along Sir Darya's line and garrisoned cities far away from each other (such as Zhand, Sighnaq, Otrar). Nasawi says that “another disastrous measure taken by the Sultan was to spread his troops out in the cities of Transoxiana and Turkestan. He left Inal-Khan (the governor who was the object of the discord) in Otrar with twenty thousand men, Qotlogh-Khan with a group of ten thousand knights in Chehrkent, Emir Ikhtijar ed-Din Kechki, [...] with thirty thousand men in Bukhara”.²⁸

The Mongols acted as they usually did, dividing the wings of their *tümen* and advancing based on good knowledge of the territory and the cities they had previously studied. A first division, under the command of the Khan himself, advanced on Otrar. Another under the command of Chagadai and Ögedei remained at the rear. A third division, commanded by Jochi, went down the river and headed against Sighnaq and Zhand (on the border between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan).

After a very long siege, Otrar fell: “The citadel and the walls were razed to the ground, and the Mongols left, taking away the common people and the craftsmen spared from the sword, either to serve as conscripts or to exercise their trade”.²⁹ The capture of Otrar was crucial for later military developments

24 *Farsakh/farsang* is a Persian term and comes from the ancient unit of measurement, *parasang*, whose measure is ambiguous, but corresponded to about 4.8 kilometers. In the 19th century the Persian *farsakh* was 6.23 kilometers, while the Arabic *farsakh* was 5.76 kilometers.

25 Nasawi, 61.

26 Ibid., 62.

27 Juvaini, II, 421–22.

28 Nasawi, 62–63.

29 Juvaini I, 107. The siege began in September 1219 and lasted a total of six months (Bartold, *Turkestan*, 406). As for the governor of the city, who according to the Mongols was responsible for the death of the ambassadors, Chinggis ordered that silver be poured into his eyes and ears and “this cruel death was the just punishment of Inal-Khan to whom his ignoble conduct, his barbaric acts and his cruel measures had been reproached by all”, Nasawi, 63. Saunders, *The History*, 57; May, *The Mongol Conquests*, 42. See also Rossabi, *The Mongols*, 57.

because it opened the breach on the Syr Darya line allowing the Mongol army to penetrate the West. However, the Chinggisid campaign foresaw the total attack on the region and the subjugation of all the wealthiest cities of Khorazm. After taking Otrar, the Great Khan headed with his younger son Tolui to Bukhara,³⁰ where he arrived in March 1220: "It is the cupola of Islam and in those regions like unto the City of Peace";³¹ Bukhara surrendered immediately.³² However, the citadel resisted and the battle to take it was harsh, and the Mongols employed locals to fight.³³ The citadel held out for twelve days then finally surrendered. Among the Turkic soldiers who defended the citadel (Qangli) "no male was spared who stood higher than the butt of a whip, and more than thirty thousand were counted slain".³⁴ When the Mongols entered the city, they demanded all the goods the inhabitants had prepared to supply the Sultan's army. The men who had survived the battle, "the youths and full-grown men that were fit for such service were pressed into a levy for the attack on Samarkand and Dabusiya".³⁵

The next target was, in fact, Samarkand. The city, one of the richest in the region, was well defended, according to Juvaini.³⁶ Samarkand "was the greatest of the countries of the Sultan's empire, in width of territory, the most pleasant of his lands in fertility of soil and, by common consent, the most delectable of the paradises of this world, among the four Edens".³⁷ The inhabitants of Samarkand had prepared to repel the siege; they had "strengthened" the citadel with "several lines of outworks" and "the walls had been raised to the Pleiades, and the moat sunk through the dry earth to the water beneath".³⁸ As usual, the Mongols assaulted the city with the vanguard they had taken during previous sieges. In this case, according to Juvaini, they were prisoners taken in Bukhara, and "whenever the villages on his [Chinggis khan's] path submitted, he in no way molested them; but whenever they offered resistance, as in

30 On which see also Nasawi, 73–76.

31 Juvaini I, 97. The City of Peace is, of course, Baghdad.

32 According to Juvaini, Bukhara was taken in March (Juvaini I, 104–107); Juzjani and Ibn al-Athir date it to February. For the dates on the fall of Samarkand see Jackson, *the Mongols in the Islamic World*, 78 and notes 48–49. Saunders, *The History*, 57; see also Weatherford, *Genghis Khan*, 7–9; Bartold, *Turkestan*, 406–07; Grousset, *L'empire des steppes*, 299. According to Timothy May the city was defended by a cavalry corps of 12,000 men who flanked the regular garrison of 20 men: May, *The Mongol Art of War*, 3.

33 "The people of Bokhara were driven against the citadel": Juvaini I, 106.

34 Juvaini I, 106–07; Nasawi, 73.

35 Ibid., I, 107.

36 Ibid., I, 116–17: 110,000 men, Turks and Tagiks, plus 20 elephants.

37 Ibid., I, 115–16.

38 Ibid., I, 117.

Sar-i-Pul and Dabusiya, he left troops to besiege them, while he himself made no halt until he reached Samarqand”.³⁹ When Chagatai and Ögedei had taken Otrar, they reunited with their father’s army outside the walls of Samarkand. Before they decided to attack, the walls and defensive systems that the inhabitants of the city had prepared to resist the Mongols were inspected. In the same period (March 1220), Chinggis sent its two most experienced generals and noyon elders Jebe and Sübe’etei (Bagatur) in pursuit of the Sultan.⁴⁰

In the capture of Samarkand, they used one of the obsidional tactics typical of nomadic armies in general and much appreciated by Mongol strategists in particular: Chinggis Khan himself led the army. He ordered his noyons to place their troops in a circle around the city. They waited for infantry units to come out and massacred them. Then they fired a barrage of arrows into the city and retreated. They repeated the sequence several times until the inhabitants of the besieged city succumbed to the hardships. Even the residents of Samarkand did not resist for long, and the city authorities quickly decided to surrender.⁴¹ Having no interest in killing the inhabitants, Chinggis Khan ordered that they accept the protection of the Mongols, “there were more than fifty thousand people who remained under such protection”.⁴² The Mongols and Chinggis, in particular, thought very highly of the courage and skill of the soldiers. Those who had resisted, despite the desperate situation, were distributed among the ranks of the army. Juvaini says that 30,000 young men were distributed to the Great Khan’s sons and their relatives because of their skill. Moreover, many were chosen to form the military vanguard.⁴³ Samarkand was taken in March 1220.⁴⁴ After the conquest of the city, the Mongols left a governor, an official who exercised power on their behalf, collected taxes, compulsory military service, controlled public order and administered justice.⁴⁵

39 Ibid., I, 117.

40 Nasawi, 75–76.

41 Juvaini I, 118–19.

42 Ibid., I, 120.

43 Ibid., I, 121–22; Grousset, *L’empire des steppes*, 300–01; Bartold, *Turkestan*, 409–10. According to the versions of Ibn al-Athir and Juzjani, the taking of Samarkand caused the death of a frightening number of people, from 50 to 70 thousand. Ibn al-Athir claims that the sultan’s army did not take part in the battle, which was fought only by the inhabitants of the city; Juvaini instead claims that a section of the army formed exclusively by Turks and led by a group of generals, left the city taking a few prisoners among the Mongols before surrendering together with the population exhausted by the siege (Juvaini, I, 120). May, *The Mongol Art of War*, 117–18.

44 Juvaini writes about May–June, but the dates given by Juzjani are more consistent with the timeline of the following events. See Juvaini I, 122 and note 22; Jackson, *The Mongols in the Islamic World*, 78 and note 49.

45 I shall focus on this aspect, which is of great importance, in the following pages.

After Samarkand, it was the turn of Urgench, the capital of Khorazm. Juvaini writes that they were familiar with the city and the whole region. “It was the site of the throne of the Sultans of the world and the dwelling-place of the celebrities of mankind”.⁴⁶ The city fell in April 1221 after a long siege during which the population strenuously resisted. The Sultan’s generals put up a robust defense, but, strengthened by the reinforcements from the newly conquered cities, the Mongols defeated the local resistance and crossed the walls. The Mongols conquered the city “quarter by quarter, house by house” took the town “destroying the buildings and slaughtering the inhabitants, until finally the whole town was in their hands. Then they drove the population into the open” and separated the artisans and workers from the others, who numbered more than 100,000; the young women and children were enslaved and taken into captivity; and the remaining men were distributed so that every fighter in the army had to put twenty-four people to death. “The army then busied themselves with plunder and rapine and destroyed what remained of the quarters and houses”.⁴⁷ And further on: “when the Mongols had ended the battle of Khorazm and had done with leading captive, plundering, slaughter and bloodshed, such of the inhabitants as were artisans were divided up and sent to the countries of the East”.⁴⁸

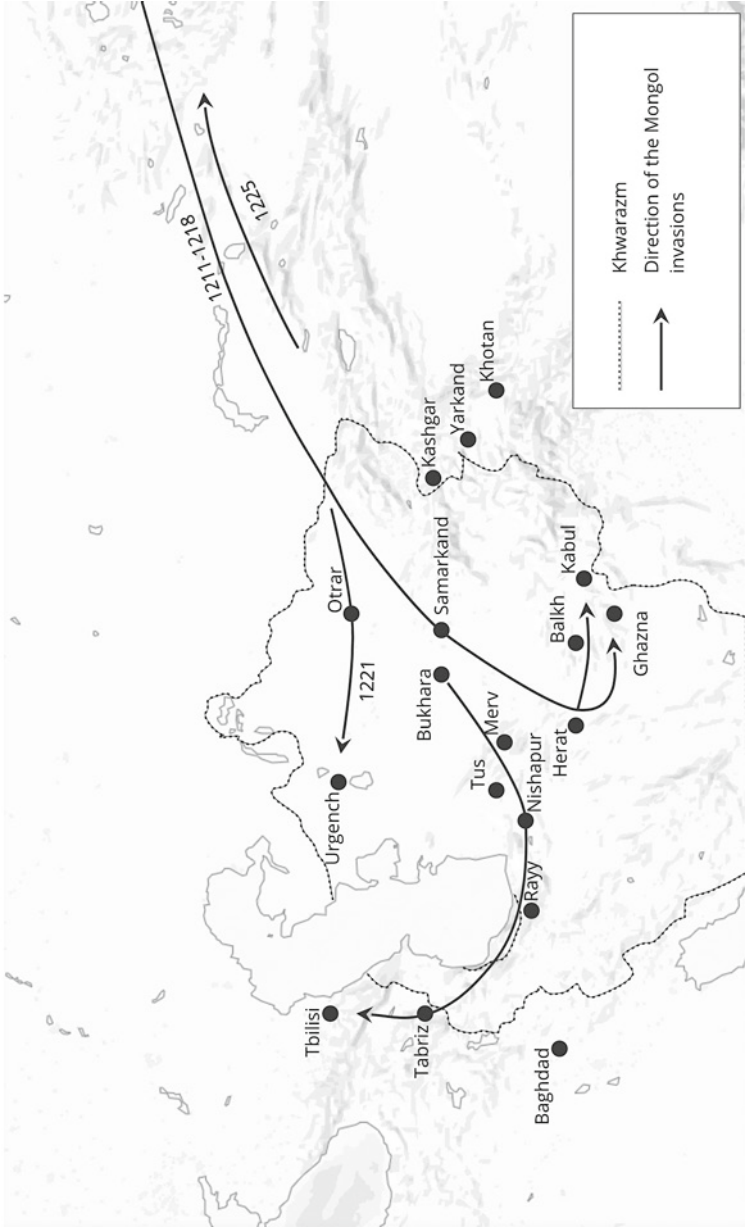
The conquest of Samarkand and Urgench made a strong impression on contemporaries, and the Sultan himself went through a harsh lesson. Without any strategically sound footholds, being more or less directly responsible for the destruction of the wealthiest cities of Khorazm and the death of tens of thousands of inhabitants, and hunted down by the army of Jebe and Sübe’etei, the Sultan sought refuge first in Balkh and then in Nishapur. On 12 Safar 617 (18 April 1220), according to Juvaini: “He entered the town, where from the excess of fear that had overcome him he constantly frightened the people with the Tartar army and bemoaned the destruction of the fortresses which he had ordered in the days of his prosperity, imagining that mere conceit would assist him in time of trouble”.⁴⁹ Both cities were located in southern Transoxiana; Balkh south of Samarkand and Nishapur between Turkmenistan and northern Iran, East of the Caspian (see map 5.2).

46 Juvaini I, 123.

47 Juvaini I, 126–27.

48 Ibid. I, 128.

49 Ibid. I, 170. According to the chronicler, the sultan spent almost a month there, until May 12. Nasawi confirms this information by saying: “During a month he spent in Nisabour [the sultan] sent messages in all directions to demand that the troops assemble and gather supplies, but the Tatars heard of these preparations and forced him to hastily abandon his plans”, Nasawi, I, 107–08.



MAP 5.2 The Mongol invasion of Central Asia

Already during the siege of Samarkand Chinggis Khan had learned that “the Sultan had crossed the river at Tirmiz”.⁵⁰ He decided to send the army under the command of his best generals to meet him. The armies of Jebe and Sübe’etei chased him into both cities. In Balkh, “the notables of the town sent a deputation to meet them”.⁵¹ The two Mongol generals did not retaliate against the inhabitants who had immediately surrendered. Following the Sultan, the Mongol army arrived at Nishapur on 24 May 1220 and proceeded along two different paths. Jebe headed to Juvain (the present Jaghatai northwest of Nishapur) and Sübe’etei to Tus (a few kilometers from Mashhad, near the Iranian-Afghan border). Crossing Persian Iraq, the two Mongolian generals attacked the villages that opposed them and limited themselves to welcoming under their protection those who quickly surrendered.⁵² Such was the fate of Tus, Damghan, Semnan. “The Mongols then plundered and massacred throughout the greater part of Iraq and departed thence to Ardabil”, which they took after a siege, the massacre of the inhabitants, and the plunder of their property.⁵³

In May 1220, the Mongols attacked Balkh, which immediately surrendered and accepted the subjugation.⁵⁴ The Sultan took refuge by the Caspian Sea, where he died in the winter 1220–1221.⁵⁵ The disappearance of Muhammad Khorazm-Shah did not put an end to the Mongol conquests. The son of Muhammad II, Jalal ud-Din, would shortly afterward give rise to a sort of restoration in Ghazni, in Afghan territory with the consequent resumption of hostilities with the Mongols.⁵⁶

The conquest of Afghanistan and Khorasan was entrusted to Tolui, with the task of completing the subjugation of Khorasan.⁵⁷ The campaign of Chinggis’s son ended with the conquest of Merv and the massacre of its inhabitants

50 Juvaini, I, 142–43. Tirmiz is present Karshi, in Uzbekistan.

51 Ibid. I, 144; Grousset, *L’empire des steppes*, 301.

52 Juvaini I, pp. 145–47.

53 Ibid. I, 174. Saunders, *The History*, 60–62.

54 Ibid. I, 147–48. May, *The Mongol Art*, 121 e segg; Grousset, *L’empire des steppes*, 301.

55 Juvaini literally writes: “Meanwhile, the Sultan having found his rest on the islands of Abaskun (it is the Caspian with a play on words between *sukun*, i.e. rest and *Abaskun*, see Juvaini I, 155 and note 6), Mujir-al-Mulk, now riding a donkey, now walking on foot, turned his reins and passed by the castle of Su’luk”. It is likely that Mohammed died on the island of Ashur-Ade, near the mouth of the Gurgan. The date is also uncertain. The most probable is December 1220; Nasawi also seems to confirm it: “The sultan was buried on the island in the year 617” (8 March 1220–25 February 1221), Nasawi, 81; see also Bartold, *Turkestan*, 426.

56 Juvaini I, 130–32.

57 Ibid., I, 150–52.

(March 1221). In the meantime, unrest had broken out in Nishapur. The revolts resulted in the assassination of the *shahna* (governor) left by the Mongols in the city at the time of their first passage a few months ago, in November 1220.⁵⁸ Toghachar (or Toquchar), one of Chinggis' sons-in-law,⁵⁹ who besieged the city, intervened. The people defended themselves and engaged in a violent battle in which Toghachar died. The Mongol army retreated, but the retaliation would be terrible. "When in the spring of 618 [1221–1222], came round and Tolui had finished with Merv, he set out for Nishapur, none knowing of his approach".⁶⁰ The population strenuously defended the city, using every weapon to repel the Mongols' assault, but it was no use. On 7 April 1221, the Mongols brought in the final assault. Three days later, it was over. Nishapur was taken on 10 April 1221 and razed to the ground.⁶¹ Toghachar's widow witnessed the massacre.⁶² After the capture of Nishapur, Tolui and his army joined Chinggis Khan at Talekhan. Chagadai and Ögedei, who had taken Urgench, also reached the army at the same place.

As mentioned above, the death of Sultan Muhammad did not end hostilities with the Mongols. Muhammad's son, Jalal ud-Din, had taken refuge in the heart of the Afghan mountains, in Ghazni, and had managed to rebuild an army, recruiting men from Turks and Afghans.⁶³ Near Parwan, the Jalal-ud-Din Khorazm-Shah defeated a Mongol detachment led by Chinggis Khan's lieutenant, Shig-qutuqu,⁶⁴ and this event must have convinced the Great Khan even more of the need to eliminate Jalal ud-Din. Chinggis arrived in Ghazni, where "he received tidings that Jalal-ud-Din had departed from thence a fortnight since with the object of crossing the Indus".⁶⁵ On 24 November 1221, the

58 "In the meanwhile the levies of Tus under their leader, one Siraj-ad-Din [...] slew the *shahna* and sent his head to Nishapur, not realizing that with that one head they had severed the heads of a great multitude and aroused from its sleep a great evil" (Juvaini I, 173).

59 Juvaini I, 174.

60 Ibid., I, 176.

61 Ibid., I, 177.

62 Ibid. I, 177: "A daughter of Chingiz-Khan, who was the chief wife of Toghachar, now entered the town with her escort, and they slew all the survivors save only four hundred persons who were selected for their craftmanship and carried off to Turkestan, where the descendants of some of them are to be found to this day"; Grousset, *L'empire des steppes*, 302.

63 Grousset, *L'empire des steppes*, 445–61; Nasawi, 93; Atwood, *Encyclopedia*, 307–08.

64 (ca. 1180–ca. 1260). Shigi-Qutuqu was a very important figure since Chinggis' childhood. On his life and career see Buell, "Šigi-Qutuqu," 75–94.

65 Juvaini I, 133.

Mongol army under Chinggis' command, after passing Ghazni – where he left one of his *noyons* as a *darugachi*⁶⁶ – continued on the Sultan's trail until the battle which took place on the banks of the Indus. "Chinggis Khan had arrived on the coast of Indus [...] on the morning of the year 618 [1221–1222] where the armies lined up".⁶⁷ The Mongol army succeeded in encircling the Sultan's troops and implemented a well-known strategy: displayed in ranks, each in the shape of an arch, one behind the other with the river "acting as a rope," writes Juvaini.⁶⁸ As they advanced towards the enemy, the Mongols increasingly reduced the latter's room for maneuver. The Mongol army overwhelmed Jalal ud-Din's men, but the Sultan managed to survive.⁶⁹ After this victory, that would have had significant consequences for Transoxiana, Chinggis sent Ögedei back to Ghazni, where the population had not opposed the government of the Mongol Basqaq. It is not clear why Chinggis "ordered everyone out into the open, and the artisans were rounded up on one side, while the others were put to death and the city destroyed".⁷⁰ After subduing almost all of Transoxiana, Chinggis Khan decided to go back to Mongolia and delegate to his sons and generals the continuation of the Sultan's research. He spent the winter of 1222 in Samarkand. At the beginning of 1223, he went up the course of Sir Darya to the Talas and Tchu steppes. In the summer of 1224, he was on the Irtysh. In early 1225 Chinggis Khan returned to his homeland as a triumphant and strengthened Great Khan and master of the Mongol ulus. An *ulus* whose size had increased dramatically.

4 The First Incursion in Caucasia and the Azov Region (1220–1221)

As the Khan returned to Mongolia, his army continued its pursuit in search of Jalal ud-Din. The Mongol intervention in the Caucasus had a dramatic prologue in 1221. The Mongol army, led by Jebe and Sübe'tei, waited for

66 The *darugachi* (also *basqaq* and *shahna*) were officials who worked closely with the Khan-appointed governors in individual towns and larger outlying villages as overseer. Their task was essentially fiscal: they had to ensure that the taxes imposed on the population were regularly paid. To do this they could use force as they had a handful of soldiers in charge. The Mongols left a functionary in every conquered city as overseer in charge of the tributes. See Atwood, *Encyclopedia*, 134.

67 Nasawi, 139. Nasawi indicates November 25th instead of 24th.

68 Juvaini I, 134–35.

69 "Like the lightning he struck upon the water/and like the wind he departed" (Juvaini I, 134); the same episode is narrated by Nasawi too (140).

70 Juvaini I, 134–35.

winter near Hamadan and “to suffer a brutal cold and thick snow”.⁷¹ They then marched towards Azerbaijan and “carried out killings and looting along the way, in the hamlets and small villages”.⁷² The two generals reached Caucasia from the south and penetrated the borders of Georgia. In those years, the reign of George IV Lasha, the successor of Tamar, was experiencing a historical phase of extraordinary artistic and cultural flourishing as well as a favorable economic climate. In addition to this, the Georgian Caucasus was among the best prepared and politically organized regions. “A copious detachment of Georgian troops (about 10,000 fighters) went to meet him”.⁷³ George IV thought of asking Azerbaijan’s atabeg, Uzbek, for help. The King sent an emissary in two directions. On the one hand, he attempted to establish diplomatic relations with Azerbaijan; on the other hand, he sought the support of Melik al-Ashraf, governor of Ahlat (Khlati) and Djezireh, to create a common front against the Mongols. “Eventually, these Barbarians arrived in the vicinity of Tbilisi”.⁷⁴ In February 1221,⁷⁵ the Christian army, together with Muslim elements sent from Azerbaijan and Ahlat, confronted the Mongol army near Tbilisi and was destroyed.⁷⁶ After the victory over the Georgians, the Mongols headed to Azerbaijan and laid siege to Maragheh, east of Mosul (March 1221).

After conquering the city on the Tigris, Jebe and Sübe’etei headed towards the Abbasid caliphate of Baghdad.⁷⁷ If this project had been accomplished, the consequences for Middle Eastern Islam would have been tragic. In the same period of the year 1221, in fact, the Crusaders had taken Damietta forcing the Muslims of Egypt to retrocede. The conquest of Baghdad would have isolated Islam both in the West and in the East and would have dealt a severe blow to the development of the entire region. However, on this occasion, the Mongols accomplished only the conquest of Hamadan, and after razing it to the ground and setting it on fire, they retook the northern route. Passing from Derbend,

71 Ibn al-Athir II, 448.

72 Ibid. II, 450. In this circumstance Athir adds that the Mongols headed towards the Caspian because “the climate there is better and there are plenty of pastures for their beasts of burden”; according to Juvaini, cit. I, p. 172 “he liked the green meadows and the great abundance of springs so much that he did not touch a hair on the inhabitants [of Radkan, in the area east of the Caspian] and left a *shahna* in place”.

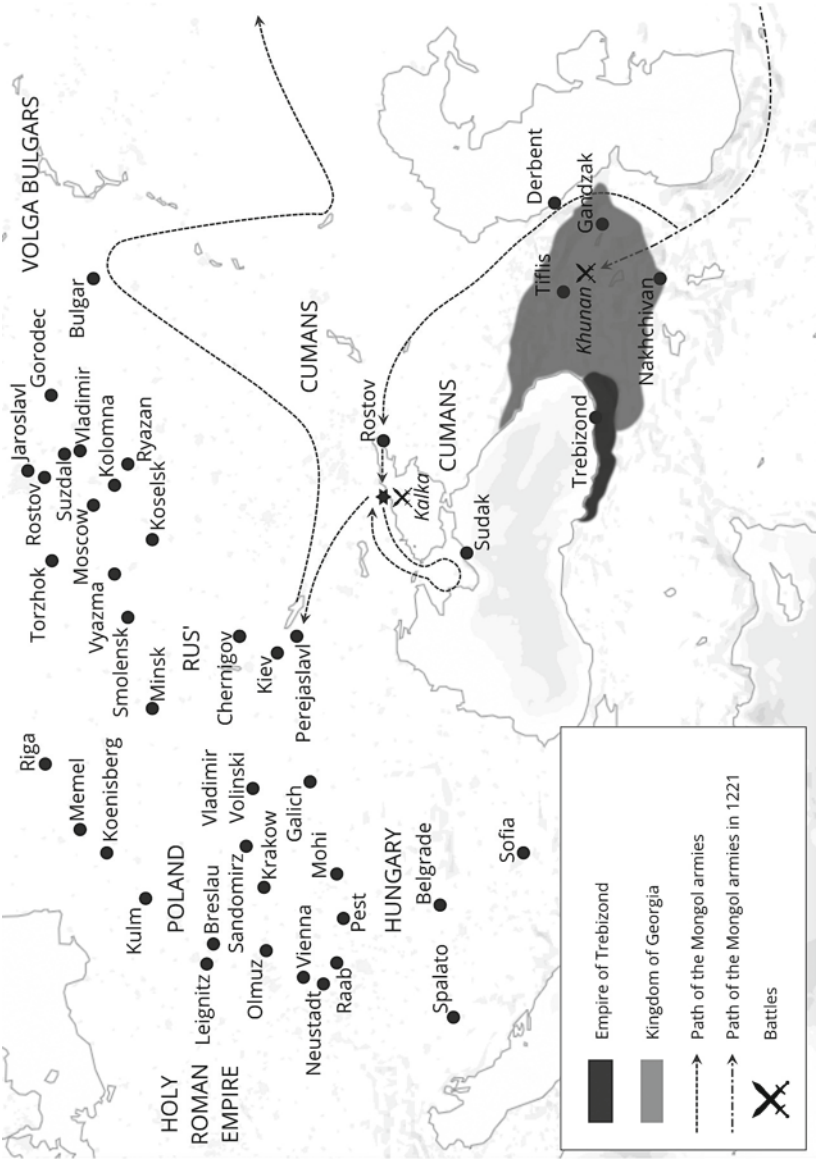
73 Ibn al-Athir II, 448.

74 Ibid., II, 449. It is quite curious how Athir calls the Mongols on this occasion. He rarely uses this expression and strangely enough he does so when he speaks of the Mongols as opposed to the Georgians, a people to whom Muslim historians showed no sympathy.

75 In January according to Ibn al-Athir.

76 May, *The Mongol Art of War*, 17–18; Grousset, *L’empire des steppes*, 306–07.

77 See also Saunders, *The History*, 58–59.



MAP 5.3 The first Mongol invasion of Caucasia, 1221-1223

on the west coast of the Caspian Sea and avoiding Tbilisi, they reached the territories of the steppes of the North Caucasus where they clashed with the populations that lived there, Lazs, Circassians, Alans and above all Qipchaqs. Ibn al-Athir carefully describes the events: “When the Tatars had crossed the Derbend and Shirvan lines, they advanced into those districts, where a great number of nations live, among them the Alans, the Lazians, and the Turkic peoples. They plundered them, killed many Laz, a people made up of Muslims and infidels, and threw themselves at those inhabitants who were hostile to them”.⁷⁸ At this point, the Persian historian tells of an ambassador that the Mongols sent to the Cumans trying to convince them that, belonging to “the same race” it made no sense for them to fight each other and that it would have been much better if they had united against the common enemy, which in that case were the Alans. “They agreed with the Qipchaqs to pay them a sum of silver, give them fabrics and other objects, and return what they had taken from them. The Qipchaqs abandoned the Alans”.⁷⁹ The Mongols exterminated the Alans and then turned to the Qipchaqs, defeated them, and “twice took what they had given them”.⁸⁰ After this first victorious fight against the Cumans, the Mongols “arrived in the city of Sudak, capital of Qipchaks”.⁸¹

The second clash with the Cumans caused the first battle between Mongols and Russians. At the dawn of the third decade of the thirteenth century, groups of Cumans were going through a slow process of acculturation with the Russians whose most evident consequence was the adoption, still limited and scattered at the time, of Christianity. The Cumans asked for help from Mstislav of Galich (who had married the daughter of chief Kutan) to face the Mongol army. The Russian princes accepted the request but their actions were divided. They decided that it would be better not to wait for the Mongols in their territories, but to confront them in the steppes (this was the land in the funnel that today forms South Russia, between Rostov and Astrakhan). As usual, the Mongols first sent a messenger intimating submission. The Russians responded by assassinating the Mongol ambassadors, thus providing the army of Jebe and Sübe’etei with the pretext for war. The confrontation between Mongol and Russian troops took place on the Kalka River (perhaps the Kalets,

78 Ibn al-Athir II, 455.

79 Ibid., II, 456.

80 Ibid., II, 456.

81 Ibid., II, 457. Athir writes that Sudak “is situated on the Khazar sea [...]. The Qipchaks sell and buy there girls, slaves, borthasi, black foxes, beavers, sable, and other productions of their country”. When the Mongols arrived in the city, the inhabitants abandoned it and took refuge in the mountains with their families and their goods, while others embarked and fled to Asia Minor.

a river that flows between the Dnepr and the Don and flows into the waters of the Azov Sea) in 1223.⁸² But not all Russian princes agreed to face the Mongols. Therefore, the most determined, Mstislav, faced the invaders together with the Cumans and was rousing defeated.⁸³ After a battle that Ibn al-Athir describes as a very long and uncertain fight, the Mongols defeated the Cuman-Russian union and “made a carnage”.⁸⁴ Later the Mongols headed towards the Sir Darya basin where they were to reunite with the rest of the army. The final blow to Rus’ and the Caucasia was therefore postponed, but not for long.

In what was essentially only a rapid raid on the Caucasus, the Mongols had strongly destabilized the Muslim sovereignty over the region and had weakened the military potential of the Georgian Kingdom. This situation greatly impressed the Islamic princes who found in the Sultan of Khorazm a valid leader who could start a campaign to recover the lost territories. Jalal ud-Din managed to find refuge and protection at Ilutnash, Turkic Sultan of Delhi (r. 1211–1236),⁸⁵ who put at his disposal a small army that he used to head towards the Caucasus and try to recover the territories recently devastated by the Mongols. In 1224, he returned to Iran where, through the intervention of the atabegs – the local hereditary governors – became the only one, as a Muslim, that could legitimately lead that principality and with it the recovery of the Islamic lands wounded by the Mongols.

Jalal ud-Din arrived in Azerbaijan in August 1225.⁸⁶ Azerbaijan was a fragmented territory, in the hands of local aristocracy, *atabeg*, formally dependent upon the Seljuks but in fact independent. Most of the Azerbaijani states were politically solid, with a well-armed and adequately prepared army. It was the case of Shirvan, ruled by the Shirvan-Shah since the ninth century and the biggest part of Modern Azerbaijan included North-Western Iran, ruled by the Eldiguzids, also *atabegs*. Following the first Mongol incursion into the northern Pontic steppes, masses of Cumans had moved south, the opposite

82 “In the year 6732 [1224] because of our sins, unknown pagans arrived. No one knows who they are [...] nor where they came from, nor what language they speak, nor what lineage they are, nor what their faith is” and again “God allowed it to happen for the pride and presumption of Russian princes” (Tverskij Chronicle, “PSRL”, 1965, some passages are translated in Saronne, *Pianto*, 171–172). For a picture of these events, see the excellent synthesis by Janet Martin, *Medieval Russia*, 147 and 150.

83 According to the Chronicle of Tver, the Cuman Khan Kotjan, father-in-law of Mstislav of Galich, said, asking them for help: “today they have taken our land: tomorrow they will take yours”, *Pianto*, cit. p. 173.

84 Ibn al-Athir II, 459.

85 Jackson, *The Delhi Sultanate*, 29–43.

86 Ibn al-Athir II, 482.

direction of the Mongols.⁸⁷ The Cuman army was improvised, mainly made up of desperate refugees fleeing the war, and poured confusedly into Azerbaijan's borders. According to Ibn al-Athir the Cumans sent a message to the prince of the country, begging him to welcome them because "the Tatars have taken over our country and plundered our wealth".⁸⁸ After some resistance, the governor of Derbend, who depended on the atabeg of Shirvan, let the Cumans settle at the borders.⁸⁹ The presence of nomads at the border determined the reaction of the Georgians; written sources speak of frequent Cuman raids in these months on Georgian territories. Such initiatives always materialized into raids on villages, plunder, and harassment of the local population. The clash soon came to an end. Towards the end of 1223, the Georgian army faced the Muslim forces and was defeated.

Uzbek, the *atabeg* of Azerbaijan (d. 1225), dealt Georgia another severe blow. When Jalal ud-Din began restoring the Muslim districts of Iraq and Iranian Persia, the only district in the region that did not immediately recognize its authority was Azerbaijan. Uzbek had to give up to Jalal ud-Din after a harsh defeat in 1225. The purpose of Islam, represented in this circumstance by the Sultan, was to restore the Khorazmian empire to the West. The Azerbaijani territory was strategic because it was the bridgehead for trade with the East and navigation over the Caspian Sea, a resource that was in the hands of the Turks since 1136 (see chapter one).⁹⁰ The Sultan was perfectly aware that the Mongol crossing into Caucasia had severely weakened the Georgian army. This was an opportunity to be exploited; the next move of Jalal ud-Din was precisely to attack the Georgians.⁹¹ He prepared for battle with over 70,000 men, according to Ibn al-Athir,⁹² but it was not enough. The two sides faced each other in the Garni valley⁹³ in August 1225, and four years after the defeat suffered at the Mongol hands, the Georgian army capitulated for the second time. Written

87 Athir writes that a part of the Cumans headed towards the "Land of the Russians", another took refuge in the mountains and a third "gathered and marched towards Derbend and Shirvan", (Ibn al-Athir II, 463–64). See also Grekov and Jakubovskij, *L'Orda d'Oro*, 34–35.

88 Ibn al-Athir II, 464.

89 The Qipchaqs had already attacked and taken Derbend in 1175.

90 On this, see Grousset, *L'empire des steppes*, 324–25.

91 Juvaini II, 426 where the Persian historian states that the Georgians "relying upon the prowess of their men and the sharpness of their lances and sabers, they gathered their forces; and mustered more than 30,000 men, they sallied forth". See also B. Dashdondog, *The Mongols and the*, 51.

92 Ibn al-Athir II, 482. Juvaini writes of 30,000 men (Juvaini II, 426).

93 Juvaini II, 427; The first clash between the Georgians and the Sultan is also narrated by Ibn al-Athir II, 483–84, which however places the event in August instead of March 1225. The Garni, already known as Azat, is a tributary of the Arasse that flows into present-day Armenia east of Yerevan; see in this regard Minorsky, *Studies in Caucasian History*, 124.

sources indicate that 20,000 Georgians perished in this attack.⁹⁴ In March of the following year, the Sultan attacked Georgia for the second time. Jalal ud-Din proceeded to Dvin.⁹⁵ Passing through the Panbak Mountains (in the region of Lake Sevan, Armenia), he reached Lori, the capital of the Armenian district of Tashir. After the resistance of the Georgian army, the Sultan's men headed south of Kur.

Between January and February 1226, the Georgian army attempted a counterattack, but without success. Indeed, Jalal ud-Din's advance at this point was even more violent and became unstoppable. Marching on Tbilisi, the Sultan attacked all the villages that stood in his way, demolished churches, replacing them with places of worship for Islam.⁹⁶ He conquered Ani and Kars; then he made his way to the "country of the Abkhazians", where small Georgian garrisons manned the territories and conquered it with relative ease.⁹⁷ A setback stopped the Sultan's advance over Georgia; one of his generals "had escaped the collar of loyalty and had left Kerman with the intention of conquering Iraq".⁹⁸ The alarm sounded the moment the Sultan arrived at the gates of Kerman, the city where the rebel general ruled; he did not hesitate to apologize to the Sultan and asked for forgiveness. Nothing more is written about how this relationship continued after this point.⁹⁹

What is certain is that between the end of 1227 and the beginning of 1228, Jalal ud-Din marched again against Georgia. "Now the sultans of Rum, Syria, Armenia, and the whole region [...] had formed a confederation and joined together to repel it; and a large army of Georgians, Alans, Armenians, Sarir, Lakz, Qufchaq, Svan, Abkhaz, Chanet, Syrians, and people of Rum gathered."¹⁰⁰ Tbilisi was attacked, sacked and set on fire. The last hard blow to the Christian kingdom was inflicted by the Sultan in 1228 when the army led by the old General Ivane was inexorably defeated.

94 Juvaini II, 440.

95 According to Juvaini, when the sultan learned that Georgia was ruled by a woman (Queen Rasudan) he said: "*base is he that entrusteth his affairs to a woman!*" (Juvaini II, 428). This outrageous reaction, even if with different words is also reported in the Georgian chronicle (Brosset, *Histoire*, 469).

96 The sources often exaggerate in negative terms with Georgia. Georgia was the only Christian kingdom in the region. The strong religious identity of Juvaini, as well as that of Rashid ad-Din, Ibn al-Athir or Nasawi (all Muslims), is certainly a brake on objectivity.

97 Ibn al-Athir II, 495.

98 Juvaini II, 433.

99 See Ibn al-Athir II, 498–500.

100 Juvaini II, 438–39. The Sarir were Avars of Daghestan; the Svan were a people of Higher Ingur, in Georgia; the Chanet were Lazians, a people living along the South-Eastern Black Sea shores.

The maneuver carried out by Jalal ud-Din was, therefore, successful. He had succeeded in bringing back under the flag of Islam part of the territories lost during the first Mongol incursion, but at what price? The wars that shattered Khorazm, Transoxiana, and Caucasia had devastating effects on their populations and their economies. The figures provided by the written sources are not entirely reliable, but they indicate the impression these events made on contemporaries. We will never know if 20,000 Georgians died in the wars against Jalal ud-Din, but it was surely a massacre. The perception of the events we find in the historians' account is a mirror of the extraordinary character of those events themselves. So, if it is true that the history of these years is one of perpetual warfare more or less everywhere, it is equally true that these wars were not the norm, not in these terms, with these consequences. The repeated Georgian defeats, paid with the cost of thousands of lives, led to a vertical collapse of the male population, especially young people, and the workforce. At the same time, the assaults on towns and villages, large and small, resulted in the indiscriminate killing of large sections of the population, including women and children. The effects of these losses were disastrous. Not only did production stop, but trade also suffered a dramatic setback. With the permanent state of war and unsafe roads, merchants could not trade. From a military point of view, the situation was no better: Georgia had represented a point of equilibrium in Muslim Caucasus. The only Christian state, rich and militarily powerful, discouraged the surrounding small centers of power from waging war so much that until the Sultan's intervention, this region had remained relatively peaceful. Finally, one must consider one more factor: the generational, therefore also military, weakening, to which Georgia had been reduced, represented a not insignificant advantage for the Mongols. When they arrived in the region, they found their enemy to have a limited capacity to fight them.

As far as the governorates and the surrounding Muslim states were concerned, the situation was not any different. The lacerations produced by the constant military campaigns of the Khorazm-Shah emerged in all their gravity when the Mongol troops arrived. The tax levies, the compulsory draft and the wars on the territory produced a situation of profound uncertainty, the outcome of which was, once again, an inability to react which was not only the consequence of the Mongol conquests; it was already a tangible fact before they appeared beyond the Caspian for the second time and made their task much easier.

By 1224 Jalal ud-Din had lashed out against the Caliphate of Baghdad.¹⁰¹ In his march, he had managed to conquer the city of Khilat, a critical strategic

101 The Prince of Ahlat, Al-Malik al-Ashraf of the Ayyubid dynasty – therefore a descendant of Saladin – had concluded a peace treaty with Georgia in 1223, Ibn al-Athir II, 474; Nasawi, 303–29.

point because it was located on the heights in the northwest of Lake Van (now in eastern Turkey), in April 1230, causing a harsh retaliation of the Seljuk sultans who felt threatened.¹⁰² In August 1230, the Seljuk sultan Ala ad-Din Kai-Qubad I of the Sultanate of Konya and the Ayyubid sultan al-Achraf inflicted a severe defeat on the army of Jalal ud-Din near Erzindjan south of Trebizond.¹⁰³ On the other hand, the conquest of the southern region between the Caspian and the Black Sea placed the Seljuk Sultanates in a dangerous position not only because of the territorial loss but also and above all from a western perspective. The presence of the Latin empire in Constantinople, the growing power of the newly established Byzantine empire in Nicaea, the Empire of Trebizond on the Anatolian coast of the Black Sea, the Kingdom of Georgia in Caucasia, all constituted an encirclement that created alarm among the Seljuk Sultanates. Leaving the field open to Jalal ad-Din meant at this time to shut the doors of the East and interrupt trade with the regions of Turkestan, and Iranian Persia.

5 The Second Mongol Incursion to the West and the Conquest of Caucasia (1230–1236)

In the summer of 1227,¹⁰⁴ during the final assault which led to the tenacious resistance of Si-Hia (particularly in the siege of the present city of Neijiang, west of Chong Qing in China), Chinggis Khan died,¹⁰⁵ and two years later, the great *quriltai* elected his successor. Before his death, Chinggis had designated Ögedei, his third son, for this purpose; it was with him that the capital of the empire was established in Karakorum.¹⁰⁶ The city was a symbol as it had been the capital of most of the ancient Turco-Mongol empires;¹⁰⁷ Juvaini maintains that “it is the opinion of the Uighur that the beginning of their generation and increase was on the banks of the river Orkhon, whose source flows from a mountain which they call Qara Qorum”.¹⁰⁸

102 Ibn al-Athir II, 497–500; Juvaini II, 449: “The conquest of Akhlat was added to these conquests and became the evening draught to that morning draught. Fear of the Sultan spread through all those regions and the tale of his severity and rigour was diffused far and wide.”

103 Grousset, *L'empire des steppes*, 325; Nasawi, 342–46; Juvaini II, 451.

104 Perhaps 18 August, but the date is uncertain. See Morgan, *The Mongols*, 63; Grousset, *L'Empire des steppes*, 309.

105 SSM XII.268, 188–89; Bartold, *Turkestan*, 459. If we accept, with Rashid ad-Din, that Chinggis was born in 1155, then he would have died at the age of 72. Instead, according to the *Yuanshi*, Temüjin was born in 1162. See Atwood, *Encyclopedia*, 97–98.

106 Di Cosmo, “Why Qara Qorum?” 67–69.

107 Grousset, *L'empire des steppes*, 320.

108 Juvaini I, 53–54. Di Cosmo, “Why Qara Qorum?” 68–79.

The eldest of Chinggis khan's sons, Jochi, had died six months before his father, in February 1227,¹⁰⁹ so the ulus that belonged to him ended up with Jochi's son and Chinggis' grandson, Batu (to whom the region furthest to the west belonged). The second of the sons of Chinggis, Chagadai, received the steppes of the ancient empire of Qara-Khitai, i.e., the area between the river Itil and Issik-Kul, including the cities of Samarkand, Bukhara, Merv. The youngest son, Tolui, was traditionally designated as guardian of the hearth, so he obtained his father's ancient homeland, between Onon and Kerulen.

The new Khan Ögedei decided to complete the conquest of Khorazm and entrusted the general Chormaghun (fl. 1221–1241) with three *tümen* to accomplish the task. The Mongol army arrived in Khorasan in the winter between 1230 and the following year. Jalal ud-Din heard the news and fled. He was probably pursuing a defensive strategy, aware of the effectiveness of the adversary. The flight to inaccessible places could have been a boost for his troops as they were indigenous, while perhaps he hoped that the Mongols did not have this knowledge. After running through a quite extensive territory, he arrived near Amid (Diyarbakir) where he died under strange circumstances in August 1231.¹¹⁰

Chormaghun remained in northeastern Persia for ten years. He established his residence on the plain between the lower reaches of the Kura and Araxes. From this position, the Mongol army headed several times towards the borders of neighboring states to raid them, first to Armenia, then to Azerbaijan, then again to the villages around Mosul, in the region of the upper course of the Tigris. In 1236 the Mongols decided to go up towards the Caucasus, and for the Georgian kingdom, it was the end. Queen Rasudan, the successor of Tamar (r. 1223–1245), was forced to abandon Tbilisi and take refuge in Kutaisi, in the plain overlooking the Black Sea. The Georgian aristocracy was placed under Mongol protection and forced to perform military service in exchange for their lives. In 1239 Chormaghun conquered Ani and Kars in Greater Armenia. The states located between the Caucasus and Anatolia had to choose this point. They could resist in front of the Mongols, trying to maintain their independent sovereignty in the region, at the risk of being defeated and the price of horrible massacres, but they could accept the submission to the Great Khan and save the lives of the population by avoiding destruction and looting. The attitudes of the Seljuk Sultanate of Anatolia and the Armenian sovereign of Cilicia, Hethum I, were different. The former sought a reaction to the advance of the

109 Bartold, *Turkestan*, 458–59; Grousset, *L'empire des steppes*, 317.

110 Maybe stabbed by a Kurd. Atwood, *Encyclopedia*, 106; Grousset, *L'empire des steppes*, 326; Juvaini II, 459.

armies of Chormaghun. The Sultan of Rum Kai-Khosrau II (r. 1237–1246) had brought the Seljuk Sultanate back to an excellent level of wealth. The army was strong, and the state was in good economic condition. He probably felt that he could deal with the new conquerors effectively. In 1242 the Mongols took and plundered Erzurum, north of Lake Van, today in eastern Turkey.

On 26 June 1243, the Turkic and Mongol armies met near Erzindjan. The men of Mongol General Baiju (fl. 1243–1260)¹¹¹ – who had replaced Chormaghun¹¹² – defeated the enemy. After the sacking of Sivas, in the heart of the Seljuk state, the Sultan accepted Mongol protection by becoming vassal of the Khan, avoiding a pointless massacre of his people. With much astuteness, Hethum I, who did not wait for the Mongols' arrival, immediately declared himself to be the subject and vassal of the noyons of Ögedei. He entered under Mongol protection and managed to exercise his sovereignty precisely as he had done until then and paid tribute to the Mongols. A similar strategy was followed by the atabeg of Mosul, who willingly accepted Mongol protection and spared the lives of its people. Baiju established the Mongol presence in Kurdistan and southwestern Georgia. In practice, the Mongols had conquered Caucasia and Persia, building an empire that stretched seamlessly from China to the Seljuk Sultanate of Iconium in Anatolia. The next step of the Mongol conquests was the North. The Pontic steppes became the target.

In the *quriltai* summoned by Ögedei in 1234 (632H), the Mongols had planned four future military operations.¹¹³ “[the Khan] devoted himself to the affairs of state and the organization of armies [...]. He assigned each son or relative a different expedition and decided to participate in the war in person”. In fact, the Khan was persuaded not to take part in the operations personally, and “since the Qifchaq and Keler tribes had not yet been completely crushed, the conquest and subjugation of those peoples were the first goal. Batu, Mengü Qa'an, and Güyük were chosen from among the princes to lead this campaign”.¹¹⁴ In addition to the expedition against the Qipchaqs and Hungarians (the *Keler* of Juvaini), the Mongols decided to wage war against Sung China that, albeit under Mongol protection, had occupied territories forbidden to them. The third expedition was to be directed towards Korea, and the fourth towards Asia Minor.

111 Baiju was appointed in 1243 by Empress Töregene. Related to Jebe, he had a solid military career, entering the imperial guard of the *keshig* rather early. Yildiz, “Baiju: The Mongol Conqueror,” 44–63; Atwood, *Encyclopedia*, 29.

112 According to Kirakos Gandzaketsi, Chormaghun had gone deaf: Kirakos Gandzaketsi, *History*, 240; Jackson, *The Mongols and the Islamic World*, 83.

113 Juvaini I, 196–97.

114 Ibid., I, 199.

The raids carried out by the steppe nomads against nearby cities were almost always rapid operations, attacks whose primary purpose was pillaging. When they accumulated a satisfactory amount of loot, they disappeared as quickly as they had arrived. The first Mongol invasions in the West appeared in a similar fashion. The first incursion into Caucasia and Rus' (that of the 1220s) had such characteristics. Twenty years later, similar news arrived in the West. Cities were destroyed, massacres against the conquered populations, and the territory was left devastated. In the West, the gravity of the situation was not immediately understood. The first Mongol incursion, which had crossed the Caucasus and reached the southern borders of Rus', had been an operation, we could say, of espionage. The Mongols had simply patrolled the lands against which they would wage war at the appropriate time. By now, the army of Baiju had solidified the Mongol presence in the Caucasus, Anatolia, and Persia. It was necessary to go up north. The Cuman chief Kutan (whom we have seen as an ally of the Rus') was the only one who understood the gravity of the situation and imagined what disaster would soon occur on the southern Russian steppes and did not wait for the Mongols to invade. When he heard the news that they had settled on the border across the Caucasus, he gathered his people together and sought refuge in the West. After crossing the Dnepr and Dniestr, he stopped at the Carpathians. He sent an emissary to King Bela of Hungary (r. 1235–1270), offering his submission in exchange for protection.

There are no reliable figures on the size of Kutan's troops, but several tens of thousands were likely.¹¹⁵ Of course, Kutan's offer was tempting to the Christian King. If they accepted direct submission, bypassing the aristocracy, they would have strengthened the authority of the former against the latter. Besides, the Hungarian clergy would have willingly agreed to protect these pagans in exchange for their mass conversion. Hungary, therefore, accepted the Cumans fleeing from the Mongols, probably in the autumn 1239.¹¹⁶ The Hungarian

115 The only written source available is that of the Archbishop of Split, Roger of Torre Maggiore (Master Roger). His *Carmen Miserabile* gives the symbolic figure of 40,000 families (*familias*) and gives a wrong year, stating that the Cumans arrived in Hungary in 1242. According to the copist "Kuten, the king of the Cumans solemnly sent his envoys [to Bela] with the message that they had fought the Tatars for years and twice defeated them, but the third time, because he was unprepared, [the Tatars] burst into his land and [...] and forced him to turn his back on the cursed Tatars". *Carmen Miserabile*: 137–138. See also Spinei 2003 308; D. Hardi 2016: 84–105. The most complete reconstruction of the relations between the Kingdom of Hungary and the Cumans is still today Berend, *At the Gate*, in particular pp. 70–73. See also Vasary, *Cumans and Tatars*, 65.

116 See Chrystalëv, *Rus'*; Saunders, *The History*, especially ch. 5 and 6; Morgan, *The Mongols*, ch. 6: *Expansion to the West: The Mongols in Russia and Persia*; Amitai-Preiss, Morgan and Griggs, *The Mongol Empire*; Roux, *Genghis Khan*.

decision to let the nomads cross its borders created quite a few problems. Their traditional social structure based on nomadism was badly reconciled with the deep-rooted Hungarian civilization; converting them to Christianity could work, even if they continued to maintain their pagan traditions for a long time. Though imposing economic systems that were stranger to them turned out to be a disaster. So much so that clashes soon broke out with the local population, peasants above all, for whom the grazing livestock that devastated the fields were a pestilence. Bela had to resort several times to measures that established the size of the land used for grazing and that which could not be used for anything other than agricultural exploitation. After being expelled in 1241, the Cumans were recalled in 1246. The Qipchaq community in Hungary constituted a small minority. According to recent investigations, they did not exceed 7–8% of the total population.¹¹⁷

6 The Conquest of the Pontic Steppes and Rus' (1236–1242)

At the end of 1236, or the beginning of 1237, the army sent after the *quriltai* of 1235 to the west and at the command of Batu (d. 1255)¹¹⁸ arrived on the Volga.¹¹⁹ Batu was the supreme commander of the army, but the strategist of the operations was the old, ingenious Sübe'etei, the architect of many Mongol victories. The *quriltai* had planned the war in the West down to the last detail and should have lasted eighteen years, but ended up to be much less. In the first days of 1237, the Mongol army entered the Northern Pontic steppes. Those who had not escaped with Kután escaped from the invaders. But a portion of the Cumans did not accept surrender. Under the orders of chieftain Batchman, they resisted, which involved not only the Cumans but also the Volga Bulgars and Alans.¹²⁰

117 Berend, *Cuman Integration*, 105; Vasary, *Cumans and Tatars*, 138–39. On Cuman emigration to Georgia see also Golden, *Cumanica I*, where the author notes the figure of 40,000 people as well as in the Hungarian case.

118 We know very little about Batu's youth. He was the son of Jochi and the *qonggirat* Öki, thus he was a grandson of Chinggis Khan. See Atwood, *Encyclopedia*, 36–37.

119 The chronology of events is not very clear. Some of the Persian sources, Juvaini and Rashid ad-Din (which, however, is largely based on the former), mentions the end of 1236. The Russians have always maintained that it was the following year based on the annals. See Martin, *Medieval Russia*, 151; Saunders, *The History*, 82; Grousset, *L'empire des steppes*, 329; Tolochko, *Kochevye narody stepej*; Fedorov-Davydov, *Zolotoordynskie goroda* 5–20; Grekov and Jakubovskij, *L'Orda d'Oro*, 40–41.

120 Spuler, *Die Goldene Horde*, 16; Grekov and Jakubovskij, *L'Orda d'Oro*, 42–43. In this regard Juvaini says: "one of the discomfited Qipchaq chieftain, a man called Bachman, had

After crossing the Volga, between 1236 and 1237, the Mongol armies spread across the steppes without encountering any resistance and proceeded in their military campaigns against Europe and against the Russian principalities. However, the core of the resistance led by the chief Batchman continued to engage in rapid raids and return to the forests on the Volga just as quickly, hiding from the Mongol army.¹²¹ To crush the rebels, Sübe'etei and Möngke (r. 1251–1259)¹²² – who were in Europe with Batu – were called back. After a long and laborious search, the Mongol generals located the Cuman camp and captured it. Batchman was eliminated and with him most of the rebels.¹²³

Between the end of the 1230s and 1242, the Mongols led by Batu made their way to Rus' and spread through Eastern Europe towards Hungary. In February 1238, the small village of Moscow was devastated, then in rapid succession, it was the turn of Suzdal' and Vladimir'. On 4 March 1238, Jurij II Vsevolodovich, Grand Duke of Suzdal' (1189–1238), was defeated by the Mongol army on the Sit, a tributary of the Mologa. Again, Mongol detachments headed for Jaroslavl' and Tver'; both cities were conquered. Operations continued until 6 December 1240, when Batu's armies swooped over Kiev and destroyed it.¹²⁴ The Mongols completed the Russian campaign with the conquest of Galich.

During operations in the forest region, a part of the army headed west. Europe knew little about the Mongols; however, the Mongols knew Europe, at least central-eastern Europe. They knew the family relationships of the most prominent reigning families, they knew the territory, the military potential of the individual kingdoms. They did not move without obtaining the information they considered necessary to undertake a military campaign. For this reason and fearing that a concerted attack on Poland might provoke the reaction of Henry II Grand Duke of Silesia and High Duke of Poland, (r. 1238–1241)

evaded pursuit together with a band of Qifchaq warriors, and he had been joined by other fugitives". (Juvaini III, 553).

121 Juvaini III, 553: "Most of his refuges and hiding-places were on the banks of the Etil [the Volga]. Here he would spring out like a jackal, seize hold of something and hide himself again".

122 Möngke (*Eternal*) was a son of Tolui (d. 1232). Born in January 1209, will be the third successor of Chinggis Khan. Atwood, *Encyclopedia*, 362–65; Allsen, *Mongol Imperialism*, 21–30.

123 Grousset, *L'empire des steppes*, 329; Pelliot, "A propos des Comans," 166–67; Juvaini III, 554, according to whom Möngke ordered him to be cut in two.

124 On the Mongols' seizure of Kiev, it is useful to see extracts from the Russian annals published in the appendix of the *Povest' o Nikole Zaraskom*, *Povest' o razorenii Rjazani Btyem*, *Pochvala rodu Rjazanskich knjazej*: Saronne, *Pianto*.

and Wenceslaus of Bohemia (r. 1230–1253), old Sübe'etei¹²⁵ decided to divide the army into three parts. The first, under the command of Hordu (Jochi's eldest son and Batu's brother, fl. 1225–1252), was to move towards Poland, the second, under the command of Qadan (a son of Ögedei), was to invade Hungary from the south, and Sübe'etei, with Batu, would take the bulk of the troops, the third part, to the village of Pest. In the winter between 1240 and the following year, the Mongols passed the Vistula. On 18 March 1241, the Polish army suffered a disastrous defeat.

On 24 March 1241 Hordu's troops swept through Poland, the besieged armies tried to contain the attack but failed. Krakow was destroyed. In the first days of April, the same fate happened to Wroclaw's campaigns, and on 9 April, Hordu brought the troops back to Liegniz. On the 9th, the army formed by Poles, German Crusaders, and Teutonic Knights was unleashed in the city. In the meantime, the troops under the command of Batu and Sübe'etei had penetrated Hungary. At the beginning of April 1241, Sübe'etei inexorably defeated the armies of King Bela IV of Hungary at the confluence of Sajo and Theiss, in front of Pest.¹²⁶

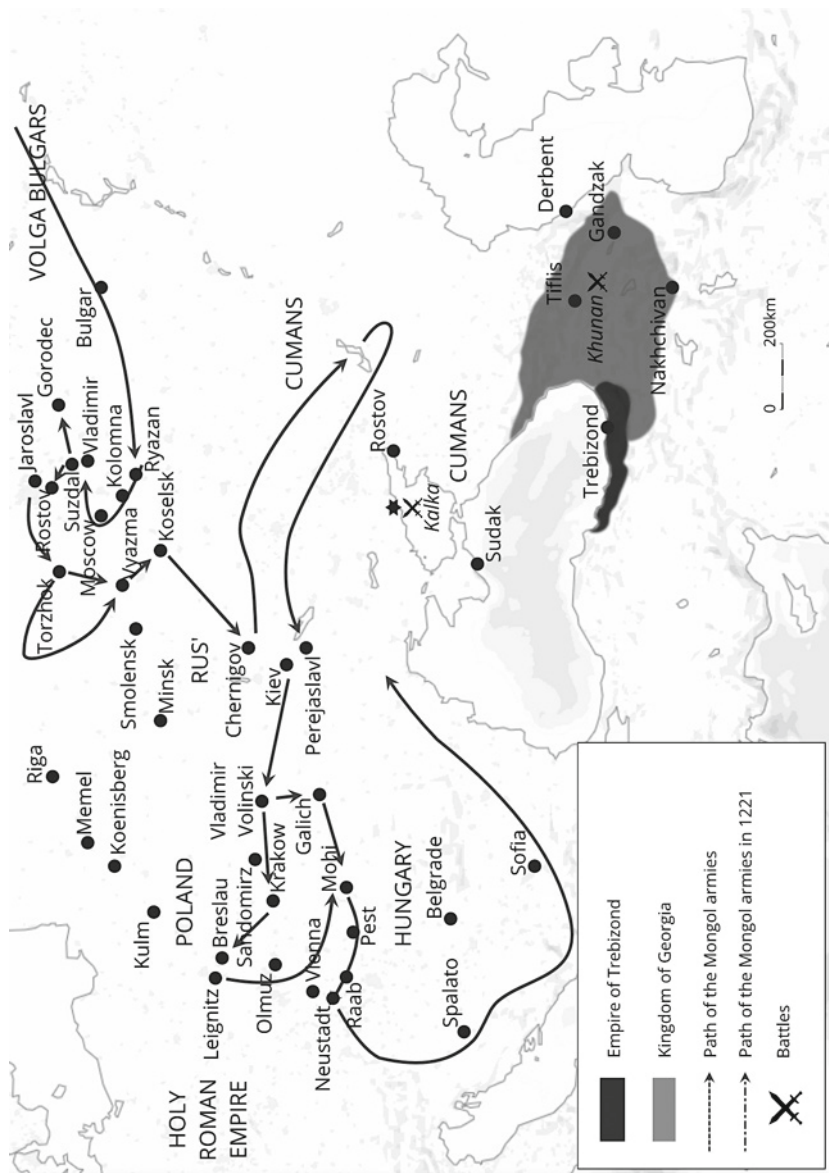
After the victory, the Mongols set the city on fire and hunted down Bela, who had fled to the Adriatic, just as they had done with the Sultan twenty years earlier. On 25 December 1241, Batu crossed the Danube at Gran (Esztergom). Meanwhile, Qadan continued his pursuit to Split, where Batu's order to turn back reached him. On 11 December Ögedei died, requiring all the Mongol generals to return for the *quriltai* that would have elected the new Khan. Batu also had to return, and many people attributed the salvation of Europe from the Mongols to this event.¹²⁷

After twenty years of raids, wars, successive conquests, and resounding victories, Temüjin's ulus had expanded to become the largest empire that had ever existed in human history. It is difficult to say whether the death of Ögedei was the cause of the Mongol decision to check their advance. The Mongols carefully managed and planned the strategy of their military campaigns. However,

125 Sübe'etei was born in 1176 and participated in all the most important military campaigns of the Mongols, since 1203.

126 Grousset, *L'Empire des steppes*, cit. p. 331. According to the French historian, the battle of Pest took place on April 11.; Vasary, *Cumans and Tatars*, 138ff.; Spuler, *Die Goldene Horde*, 10ff.; May, *The Mongol Art*, 19–20; May, *The Mongol Conquests*, 47–49.

127 On the causes that determined the withdrawal of the Mongols from Central Europe the debate has been rekindled in recent years. Particularly thanks to new theories that take into consideration the climatic factor. See Büntgen and Di Cosmo, "Climatic and environmental aspects," 25606; Di Cosmo et al. "Environmental stress," 439–63; Büntgen and Di Cosmo, "Reply," 20171005.



MAP 5.4 The Mongol invasion of Rus'

the *quriltai* with which the new Khan had ordered the campaigns in Europe did not foresee maximum boundaries or minimum limits to which the military commanders should have strictly adhered.¹²⁸ The image that contemporaries had of their impact in the West has long influenced critical historiography's point of view. The organization with which they fought and the innovative military strategies they implemented in battle impressed observers in such a way that at a certain point, their fame certainly outweighed the real threat they could have posed to Europe. One name itself, Tartars, used continuously in Western written sources, is proof of the West's supernatural association of Tatars with devils, inasmuch as this ethnic group inhabited the Mongol empire and were linked by a false etymology to the classical (Hell). Mongol military operations completely changed the political geography of an entire continent and of the whole region that embraces the Black Sea, excluding only the western part, Dobruja and Byzantium.

The effects of the Mongol domination reverberated at a political level, with the partial and uneven institutional renewal of the conquered states, and from an economic and cultural point of view. The Caucasus and the Azov represented the gateway to this new political entity and its economic potential. These regions became the center of a complex commercial network that branched out from there into all the major squares of the unified Mongol East. It is difficult to determine the extent to which the work of Chinggis Khan's army transformed a purely mental image into a concrete and accessible reality. The fact is that in the first forty years of the thirteenth century, everything changed. The economic-commercial spaces (thus, the cultural ones as well) from Asia to Europe were like points integrated, but they rarely exceeded the regional level; they were like spaces that did not communicate between the most distant geographical extremes. The Mongol conquest connected the dots, all of them. From the Fourth Crusade to the conquest of Kiev, the Orient opened up to the resourcefulness and formidable organization of Western merchants and put them in contact with the equally advanced mercantile culture of the Asians.

The devastation described by Western travelers, referring to the cities where the battles were fought by the Mongols, gave way to reconstruction and institutional reorganization. Batu, heir to the territory furthest from the seat of the Mongol Empire, founded the Ulus Jochi and was particularly sensitive to the need for rebuilding. It is no coincidence that observers at the time admired his openness to the West and his appreciation for the need to trade. Batu realized perfectly well that after the conquest, it was necessary to set in motion a virtuous process and bring wealth back to the war-torn regions. "He was a very

¹²⁸ Allsen, *Mongol Imperialism*, 18–20.

just man and friend of the Muslims; under his protection, the Muslims lived freely [...]. In the shadow of his protection, the Muslims of Turkestan enjoyed great tranquility and extraordinary security”.¹²⁹ Juvaini also noted Batu’s particular attention to the merchants and their business: “From all sides, the merchants brought him goods; whatever it was, he took it, and paid for it at a price far above its value. To the sultans of Rum, and Syria, and other countries, he lavished privileges, and *jarlyk* (safe-conduct), and whoever came to his service would not return without a return”.¹³⁰

The Mongol invasion had violent consequences for Caucasia, disrupting a series of partly acquired and already weakened structures. The general devastation produced by the wars imposed a massive effort for rapid reconstruction, on many fronts. In this regard the Mongols proved to be a catalyst.

129 Grekov and Jakubovskij, *L’Orda d’Oro*, 45. These are the words of the Persian historian Al-Juzjani, author of the *Ṭabaqāt-e nāṣeri* (*The Tables of Nasir*) who did not have particularly positive feelings for the Mongols.

130 Juvaini I, 300–01. Most written sources agree in portraying a positive image of Batu, extolling his qualities as a good administrator and protector of merchants.

The Political Consequences of the Mongol Conquests and the Caucasian “Separation”

1 Plundering as a First Response

The conquest and submission of a sedentary society by the nomads is only one way of forming the nomadic state.¹ On the contrary, it is equally valid that not all the conquests by nomadic formations have generated organisms that we can legitimately define as states. While expansion was necessary for the nomadic reality, it did not always lead to the formation of states.² As mentioned above, nomadic societies are often incapable of providing for all their essential needs; therefore, a complex interaction with stable and economically diversified contexts based on an advanced productive organization was often necessary. However, as Nicola Di Cosmo has rightly pointed out,³ in order to accept the theory according to which the relations between nomadism and sedentary neighbors consisted in a sort of constant need of the former for the resources of the latter, we should accept that the steppe nomads could not produce anything; in other words, that agriculture was completely absent. Some nomadic unions did not practice agriculture, others instead did.

The hostile environment in which the earliest nomadic unions arose was decisive in influencing most of their ritualized and coherent behaviors. From this point of view, one of the most urgent responses to the associative cells' impelling needs was the raid or the organized hoarding of other people's goods. This is a peculiar aspect of nomadism, even though, as we have underlined above, most of the medieval wars had similar characteristics even when waged in sedentary contexts.

-
- 1 We could say, to simplify, that the nomadic state can be understood as a social organism which, as a result of a constant evolutionary process, has reached a solid political organization and in which most of the population lives in a condition of nomadism. Cfr. Khazanov, *Nomads and the outside world*, 228.
 - 2 For an overview of the problem in addition to Khazanov's abovementioned essay see N.N. Kradin, *Nomadism*, 368–88; Di Cosmo, *State formation*. Still very interesting, though debatable, are the conclusions in L. Krader, “The origin of the State,” 93–107. On this, see Munkuev, *Zametki*, 409–46 and Khazanov, *Nomads and the outside world*, 234.
 - 3 Di Cosmo, *Ancient Inner Asian Nomads*, 1094.

From the earliest stages of the unification process, the Mongols had a strong propensity for expansion, followed by the subjugation of the surrounding tribes. In the context of a nomadic economy, plundering was the fundamental element used to take possession of those goods that the tribe needed and was unable to produce (or realized that they needed them the moment they came into contact with them). From this point of view, interaction with sedentary societies was necessary and frequent. Raids were not impromptu and improvised phenomena. On the contrary, they were very well organized and part of a complex supply system. According to *The Secret History*, Chinggis Khan defeated the Merkits by “capturing his entire ulus [refers to Togtoga, the *beki* of the Merkits] with all his subjects and took their homes”.⁴

Juvaini himself says that during military operations in Turkestan, the Mongols regularly took “livestock and textiles”.⁵ Ibn al-Athir says that in Georgia, the Mongols asked the population of Ganja (Gandzak) for gold and money.⁶ During the capture of Gandzak, “Next the T’at’ars circulated through all the districts around the city to dig up and hunt for goods and wares. They discovered many articles made of gold, silver, copper and iron, as well as various garments which had been hidden in cellars and subterranean chambers.”⁷ Grigor of Akner also describes the taking of Gandzak as a misfortune in which plundering was perpetrated several times against civilians:

They took the cave of the great *vardapet* Vanakan, full of much wealth and took away our glorious *vardapet* himself, with his attending students. However, the entire country, united in grief, gave much treasure and gold and purchased their *vardapet* and his students.⁸

The episodes of plundering during the conquests were frequent, and the written sources speak of them in a tone of outrage. Of course, the Armenian and Georgian chroniclers underline the theft of sacred scriptures, religious books,

4 SSM VII.197, 115–16.

5 Juvaini I, 98; Allsen, *Commodity and exchange*, 27.

6 Ibn al-Athir, in Allsen, *Commodity and exchange*, 27–28; Brosset, *Histoire*, 71.

7 Kirakos Gandzakets'i, *History*, 199. See also Arzoumanian, *Studies in Armenian Historiography*. The Armenian monk Kirakos was probably born in the early 13th century. He worked in the monasteries of Getik and Gandzak until the Mongol invasion of Caucasia when he was captured. See Boyle, “Kirakos of Ganjak,” 199–214.

8 Grigor Arknerts'i, *History*, 4. Blake and Frye, “History of the Nation of Archers,” 297: “They took Terunakan and the new fortress, also the [rock caves] of the great *vardapet*, all of his riches to the full, and they led away into captivity our glorious *vardapet* himself, Vanakan, with all of his followers. Then all of the country showed compassion and gave much treasure and gold and ransomed our *vardapet* and his disciples”.

and churches' plundering with considerable indignation and abundance of details. In raids, the best pieces were left to eminent personages, while the rest of the army had to make do with what was left. This system gave rise to an earlier form of circulation of goods within the vast and newly formed Mongol Empire.

Another form of plundering was undoubtedly the taxation imposed on the conquered states in the first phase of domination, which was not the result of a structural policy aimed at maintaining public administration. This aspect will emerge in time when the ruling class will begin to acquire full awareness of the administrative needs in local realities and after the Mongolian aristocracy had only partially assimilated itself in the local context. Of course, this phenomenon could only occur in those parts of the Empire where the Mongol ruling class flanked or took over the local ruling class, especially in those territories where this did not happen (as in Rus') taxation remained mostly a form of arbitrary and irregular pillaging. For example, when Chormaghun had completed the Caucasian campaign in the 1230s, Ögedei ordered him to demand a fixed tax from the Caliph of Baghdad; this charge consisted of cattle and gold and the proceeds (especially Persian *nasij* and Damascus cloth).⁹ This was an effective system of control over the local aristocracy, but it was also a practice that the Mongols could not give up. The process of reidentification was slow and very complex, but it took place only in some parts of the Empire, resulting in the indiscriminate and arbitrary cessation of the levy. We have repeatedly emphasized the good predisposition of the Mongols towards trade. The Mongols saw trade as a form of income necessary for the post-conquest reconstruction. Furthermore, trade was the only activity whose revenue could balance the structural disequilibrium between countries and cities typical of the medieval Asian economy.¹⁰

2 The Organizational Processes

The Mongol Empire was a form of organized power born from the extraordinary achievements of Chinggis Khan and his successors. Chinggis' political strategy was implemented by his successors, which led to a considerable increase in the flow of goods, particularly textiles, through Eurasia. After a few decades of domination, the Mongol ruling class fully understood the importance of a practice with which they were unfamiliar: production as a means to engage in

9 Allsen, *Commodity and exchange*, 29.

10 Allsen, "Mongolian Princes," 83–126.

trade. By the mid-thirteenth century, many parts of the Empire, from China to Persia, were capable of producing most of the products the population needed and could create the surplus by which international trade took effect. The governors of Yuan China, for example, were well aware that supporting production locally rather than wasting energy and means to acquire those same goods elsewhere was an unprofitable practice. On the other hand, the Mongols' nomadic origin created practical problems for them that they could only solve over time and never definitively. One of the main obstacles they faced after the conquests was the management of a system that they knew only 'theoretically' but were unable to implement in practice.

As we have seen when talking about the social organization among the traditional Mongol tribes, the nomad social identity was the result of a leveling out which was not integral, but rather widespread. Under this associative paradigm and under the daily environmental conditions they faced, the nomads carried out most of the tasks required by the itinerant life in the steppe. When these same individuals came into contact with a new reality, in which there were utterly different needs (or at least different ways of satisfying them), they found themselves in difficulty and had to resort to the exploitation of human resources they were familiar with. This is what happened in Yuan China and, albeit to a lesser extent, in the Ilkhanate. The Yuan, in particular, were the only Mongolian leaders of the entire Empire who never converted to Islam, nor did they rely on local leadership. The territorial aristocracy suffered greatly during the Mongol government, and the experience of Marco Polo is emblematic from this point of view. Foreigners, Moslems of Turkestan above all, were called and sometimes included in the highest ranks of the public administration. If in China the local professional bureaucrats were often replaced by foreign officials, in the Ilkhanate the former were joined by merchants and clergy in administering the institutions. These two aspects were crucial to Middle Eastern life, and control over them often meant being able to control the population with greater effectiveness.¹¹

In the Ulus Jochi, the situation stabilized in an even different way. We will see that the Mongol ruling class did not exercise direct control over the territory except in certain areas and centers that they considered fundamental for the management of a more profitable business. Here, too, the environment played a crucial role because Rus' was almost entirely immersed in a region rich in forests; the Mongols were not familiar with forests, nor did they know how to survive in them by exploiting their resources. For this reason, in addition to the many political causes, they never settled there permanently, preferring

11 Allsen, *Commodity and exchange*, 31.

the fertile plains on the lower course of the Volga and leaving -only when necessary- a governor to administer the more distant districts. We can cite, by way of example, the case of western immigration: the Genoese city of Caffa, located in the Crimea, enjoyed total autonomy both from the motherland and from the Mongol governor of Solgat with whom it ended up waging war. The same thing happened, to a lesser extent, in Soldaïa and Tana.¹² Indeed, western merchants often had to face the sudden political changes that took place in the region and were always subject to strict taxation, but this did not slow down the migratory drive, nor did it reduce their profits. In the Ilkhanate, many people climbed important social positions during the Mongol domination, but the most valuable workers, on which the Mongols concentrated their major “recruitment” efforts were the artisans. They were deployed in the provinces of the Empire according to a general subdivision of labor that provided for three main categories: those who worked at court, those employed in the army, and those who produced “privately” and were subject to government taxation.

In China, artisans made up a distinct social class, while there is no available information as such for the Ilkhanate and the Golden Horde. In fact, from the second half of the thirteenth century, production (especially of fabrics) underwent a sharp increase in much of the Empire. The *Pax Mongolica* resulted in the opening of the eastern markets, which guaranteed a long-distance circulation of commodities that were produced even before the thirteenth century. Nevertheless, from the middle of the century, some productive processes were systematically organized to satisfy a more demanding market and under the stimulus of the Mongolian ruling class's will.

Therefore, the Mongols remained substantially nomadic, but were very quick to grasp the importance of production for trade and to create the best conditions for it to flourish. In Asia, trade relations between Yuan China and the Ilkhanate were intense beginning from the early years of the Middle Eastern Mongolian state and gradually become part of a broader context animated by merchants of various backgrounds, from Italy to Egypt.¹³ The Mongols actively participated in this trade. Ibn Muhammad al-Tibi, the Mongol superintendent in charge of tax collection in southern Ilkhanate, had set up a vivacious and efficient trade system between the territories under his administration and

12 None of the other Western mercantile settlements in the Mongol empire reached the independence of Caffa. See the already mentioned work of Michel Balard (*La Romanie g noise*). On Tana see Skr inskaja, “Storia della Tana,” 3–47; Berindei and Veinstein, “La Tana-Azaq,” 110–201; Karpov, “On the origin of medieval Tana,” 225–35; Karpov, *Srednevekovyj Pont*, 343–62; Pubblici, “Venezia e il mar d’Azov,” 435–84; Pubblici, “Antagonism and coexistence,” 25–47.

13 Allsen, *Culture and Conquest*, 42; Amitai Preiss, *Mongols and Mamluks* cit.

Yuan China. Wassaf claims that the products manufactured in remote China were consumed in the West.¹⁴ Ibn Battuta, who arrived in China in 1327, states that many Chinese ships were sailing out to sea in the direction of the Persian Gulf.¹⁵ From the second half of the thirteenth century, China experienced a moment of extraordinary economic growth driven by increased production and the exploitation of new commercial opportunities.¹⁶ The Sung Dynasty encouraged trade with Muslim Turkestan, and when the Mongol Yuan dynasty prevailed, the Central Asian economy received a new and beneficial impulse. The political situation changed considerably. The Chinese market was entirely new for medieval Europe and had enormous potential. Associations with Muslim merchants (*ortakh*)¹⁷ were set up, which obtained loans from the government to support their activities; mosques, hospitals, and bazaars were built and obtained substantial administrative autonomy.

The trade routes linking Turkestan internally with the Far East were already well developed before the Mongol conquest, but they also benefited from the increased security provided by the new political-administrative body. The Mongols were well acquainted with the areas where the main caravan roads passed and were profoundly aware of the potential of the rivers; they were much less fond of the mountains and the difficulties they faced in supplying the resources necessary for subsistence. Marco Polo, when he passed through the Tibetan road, through the cities of Wakhān and Shughnān to go back to the region of Kāshghar, said that after twenty days of traveling through deserted places “there are a lot of castles and houses”;¹⁸ and later he added that “it is great, that there are eight great kingdoms and a considerable quantity of cities and castles. And he hath in many places rivers and lakes, and mountains, where gold speck is traded in high quantity”.¹⁹ Marco Polo’s narrative is without doubts a demonstration of the extraordinary mobility from which a merchant, whether it be a western merchant or not, could benefit while

14 Wassaf (J. von Hammer – Purgstall, *Geschichte Wassafs*, Wien 1856), pp. 37–39; Spuler, *History of the Mongols*, 165–68; see also Allsen, *Culture and conquest*, 42; Aubin, “Les princes d’Ormuz,” 89–99.

15 The editions of Ibn Battuta’s travels are many, from the fundamental translation by Defremery and Sanguinetti, *Voyages*, Paris 1854, translated and republished many times (I have utilized mainly *The Travels of Ibn Battuta, AD 1325–1354*, 1962, in 2 voll.). The passage quoted here is Ibn Battuta, *The Travels* cit., vol. II, p. 320.

16 See on this the beautiful book by Hans Ulrich Vogel, *Marco Polo*.

17 Enkhbold, “The role of the ortoq,” 531–47.

18 Marco Polo, *Il Milione* XCIX, 275. On Marco Polo see Olschki, *Marco Polo*. The editions of Marco Polo’s *Milione* are numerous, of course. For a precise and complete survey see Vogel, *Marco Polo was in China*, 547–54.

19 Marco Polo, *Il Milione* C, 277. *Gold speck* is *pagliuola* in Marco Polo, gold powder (*pagliuola* = pagliuzze).

working within the Mongol Empire. The *Divisament (Milione)* is a substantially reliable source, and his accounts, although not always first-hand, are precise and informative. On the other hand, the fantastic and literary dimension of Marco Polo's story has all too often obscured the fact that he was a merchant, and with a mercantile culture. In fact, Marco Polo's book is first and above all a handbook for merchants, a *manuale di mercatura*, that the Pisan intellectual Rustichello (who physically wrote the *Milione*) dressed into a literary work. The reading of Marco Polo's *Milione* gives an idea of what the Mongol administration of such a vast territory represented in the years following the conquests.

The formation of the Mongol empire is an example of how a political body can develop quickly enough and just as quickly collapse. Domination certainly had very different characteristics in the many territories over which it spread. Therefore, we should consider the case of Caucasia in detail and distinguish the southern area from the Azov. It is also important to take a close look at what remained between the influence of the westernmost "states" of the entire political system created by the Mongols: the Ulus Jochi and the Ilkhanate.

3 The Reorganization of the Territory and the *New Caucasian Geography*

The outcomes of the Mongol campaign gave rise to a profound reorganization of power. Since 1236, Tbilisi had been under Mongol authority. The city maintained its institutions, but these were directly responsible for their actions towards the Mongol exponents in the region (immediately after the conquest this task fell directly to General Chormaghun). In 1239 Greater Armenia had fallen with the conquest of Kars and Ani. In 1242 Chormaghun had brought the attack to the heart of the Seljuk Sultanate. The fall of Erzurum and Erzincan determined the passage of the Rum territory into the hands of the Mongols (26 June 1243). The conquest of Armenia, Georgia, and the Sultanate of Iconium led to the surrender of the Russian principalities. The entire area between the Black and the Caspian Sea, in addition to the Northern Pontic steppes, was, more or less directly, under Mongol authority.

At the death of the great Khan Ögedei (1241), his son Güyük (1246–1248) took over the leadership. Internal conflicts within the imperial family, disputes over the succession, and the premature death of the Khan (in 1248 he was just 43 years old) weakened Mongol expansionism. The contrasts at court were already harsh between the Chagataid (and Ögedei) party on one side and Tolui's party on the other. Batu, Jochi's son, took a position in favor of the Toluids, represented by Möngke. He was a firm believer in the need to reposition their armies, especially in the East, and consolidate power over China. It is

probable that Batu looked favorably on Möngke's election because by directing his efforts in the East, the new Khan would have left him alone in the West, and Batu could have increased his autonomy from the Empire. Batu likely wanted to descend southwards to the Transcaucasia and extend his sovereignty over the Abbasid Caliphate of Baghdad.

Güyük, who came to power thanks to the firm will of his mother, Töregene (d. 1246),²⁰ is the one who received John Plano Carpini. The Umbrian Franciscan describes him as an energetic man who was very attached to his power.²¹ Indeed, the Khan was convinced of the need to explore and, if possible, extend Mongol power to the West. In Caucasia, Güyük imposed the separation of Georgia into two separate parts: Kartli and Imereti. Georgia, as said, was not directly controlled by the Mongols. They had forced the local aristocracy, which governed quite autonomously, into loyalty. However, during this period, the Mongol High Command (whose headquarters were close to Georgia, on the Mughan plain in) was still able to affect political equals at will. Kartli was assigned to David IV's illegitimate son, David Ulu (*The Elder*, r. 1247–1270), while the son of the deposed Queen Rasudan, David Narin (r. 1245–1259), preserved the territory of the Imereti.²² In the Caucasus, the system of control exercised by the new rulers often resulted in the sudden deposition of a sovereign and the immediate appointment of a successor outside the local dynastic line.²³ In Asia Minor, Güyük granted the throne of Rum to Sultan Qilich Arslan IV (d. 1265), ousting his legitimate heir, his elder brother Kaykavus II (d. 1279).²⁴

On Güyük's death, the dynastic conflicts within the imperial clan escalated and resulted in a real coup d'état from which the party of Möngke (r. 1251–1259),²⁵ son of Tolui, the grandson of Chinggis, emerged victorious. Batu had actively participated in this operation. The new Khan's election determined

20 De Nicola, *Women in Mongol Iran*, 68–72 and 146–49.

21 Rashid ad-Din argues that the election of Güyük was a transgression of the orders of Ögedei, who wanted to place his nephew Shiremün at the head of the empire (Boyle, *The successors*, 19; Rashiduddin/Thackston, 263). Later the Persian historian explains how Güyük came to power (Boyle, *The successors*, 180–84; Rashiduddin/Thackston, 278). See also what Hayton says (STHA XIX, 319–22).

22 Grousset, *L'empire des steppes*, 337; Kirakos Gandzakets'i, 264–66.

23 Bedrosian, *The Turco-Mongol invasions*, 180–201; Dashdondog, "The Mongol Conquerors," 53–82.

24 Jackson, *The Mongols and the Islamic World*, 255–56; Melville, "Anatolia under the Mongols," 55. For other example of the Mongol "use" of local aristocracy see Bedrosian, *The Turco-Mongol invasions*, 156–79.

25 On Möngke see Rashid ad-Din (Boyle, *The successors*, 187–237; Rashiduddin/Thackston, 283–87) ed Hayton (STHA XXIII, 319–28). See also Allsen, "Guard and Government," 495–521.

the Empire's subsequent foreign policy, but it did not fulfill Batu's hopes. Indeed, compared to Güyük, the new Khan produced his most significant effort in the eastern regions and with Sung China in particular, but he was soon also concerned with consolidating his power in the West. Under his rule, the vast territory under Mongolian control regained some stability, and new military campaigns became possible. In 1253 the Mongols planned a westward expedition to attack the oldest and most stable power in the Middle East, the Caliphate of Baghdad. Not being able to intervene in any way in Batu's territories due to the fact that the latter had concretely helped him to take the throne and above all, because the ulus of Batu was a concession Chinggis himself had given to Batu, which effectively meant it was untouchable. He, thus, planned the enlargement of the conquests in the Middle East. The operation, which began in 1253, had its epilogue in 1258 with the conquest of Mesopotamia and Baghdad. In 1260 the army of Hülegü (1217–1265), brother of Möngke and responsible for the campaign in the Middle East, was defeated by the Mamluks in 'Ayn Jālūt, Syria.²⁶

In fact, the death of Möngke – who had fallen in battle during the campaigns against the Sung – had pushed Hülegü to withdraw most of the troops stationed in Syria. The rest of the Mongol army that remained to guard the recently conquered territories was entrusted to Commander Ked-Bugha (d. 1260), and on 3 September 1260 was attacked by surprise by the Mamluks, who had the better of it.²⁷ The defeat did not change the substance of things for the Mongols, while it proved decisive for Egypt. The Mongols were facing dynastic troubles unfolded after the death of Möngke; the Mamluks acquired prestige and reinforced their grasp in the internal region of Syria.

The conquest of Baghdad by Hülegü gave birth to the Ilkhanate.²⁸ The new, considerably autonomous state – we don't know how much Möngke wanted it,²⁹ but it was certainly much appreciated by Hülegü – was a further motive for stiffening relations with the leaders of the ulus of Jochi who saw in the

26 Amitai-Preiss, *Mongols and Mamluks*, 26–48; Halperin, "The Kipchak Connection," 229–45; Masson Smith, "Ayn Jalut," 307–45.

27 May, *The Mongol Conquests*, 56–57.

28 The Mongol conquest of Persia would deserve its own treatment. See in this regard the work of Allsen, *Culture and Conquest*, in particular ch. 3–5, 15–40, and the relative bibliography.

29 According to Rashid ad-Din, since the early planning of the Western campaigns Möngke's design was for Hülegü to remain in the conquered regions (Rashiduddin/Thackston, 292–93). In fact, this was the first time that a member of the Chinggisid family participated into a military campaign in Batu's area of influence. Furthermore, according to the *Yuanshi* (*history of the Yuan dynasty*), in 1252 Möngke had given Georgia as an appanage to Berke (r. 1256–1266), future khan of the Ulus Jochi. Jackson, *The Mongols and the Islamic World*, 144.

creation of the Ilkhanate as a dangerous antagonism, and a shift of family disputes to the West. The title of Ilkhan (Khan minor, “of a pacified area”³⁰) was perhaps adopted precisely to stress Hülegü’s formal subordination to the Northern Khan Batu and the Jochids³¹ and his successors so as not to have problems with it. After Hülegü arrived in Iran and established his sovereignty as far as the Caucasia, relations between the two became considerably more complicated. It is likely that the Khan’s brother had been temporarily sent to Iran without the intention of creating a single kingdom in Karakorum under the direct control of Hülegü.³² In light of military developments linked to the conquest of territory in Persia, the Gran Khanate probably intended to place under the formal authority of Batu the future Ilkhanate.

René Grousset described Möngke as the only heir worthy of Chinggis.³³ He was a figure highly present in the political affairs of the Empire. A tough politician, who was energetic and intelligent. He wanted to keep the Empire united and not give excessive autonomy to the peripheral provinces and succeeded in stabilizing the vast territory in all its regions. He had to fight hard in and outside of court, in the peripheral ulus, to assert his authority, but he ultimately succeeded. The real obstacle to Möngke’s unitarist policy was always Batu, another strong man of great charisma bearing the prestige of the Jochid house. The relations between the two were good, but they had a different conception of the Empire. *Batu*, a descendant of the imperial oboq, tended to make himself as independent as possible from Karakorum; Möngke, for his part, was convinced that the Empire should have its formal unity and leave to the peripheral ulus a limited autonomy, a condition inapplicable within such a vast realm.

When Batu initiated the organization of the vast territory he had inherited and substantially expanded, he had to account for his operations with the Great Khan. The peripheral ulus were still firmly tied to the Gran Khanate, the ulus of Chinggis. Nevertheless, the Jochids gained substantial independence from the rest of the Empire and went through a long phase of development that progressively strengthened its autonomy. The internal politics of the new state directly influenced the outlying areas. Subcaucasia, although formally in the hands of the local aristocracy, suffered the consequences of the opening to the Latin West implemented by Batu. The same

30 Buell, *Historical Dictionary*, 165.

31 Allsen, *Culture and conquest* cit., 22–23; Pelliot and Hambis, *Histoire des campagnes*, 363–364; Boyle, “The Death of the Last ‘Abbasid Caliph,’” 151–52.

32 Allsen, *Culture and Conquest*, 20.

33 Grousset, *L’empire des steppes*, 341. Nitid is the reconstruction of Möngke as political leader and administrator given by Thomas Allsen, *Mongol Imperialism*.

fate fell to Transcaucasia at the same time as the consolidation of the Mongol presence (Hülegü) in the South. The clash between the two Mongol states would soon become inevitable and would closely involve the entire Caucasia line, causing a new political upheaval.

4 Caucasia and the Ilkhanate

After the Mongol invasion of 1236, Caucasia finally entered the orbit of the Mongols. The election of Qubilai as Great Khan exacerbated the internecine rivalries. The new khan of the Ulus Jochi, Berke (r. 1257–1266),³⁴ had supported Arigh Böke against the election of Qubilai. When Qubilai was finally elected – in the quriltai of April 1260 – Arigh Böke did not accept the result – in fact there was a coup – and the civil war became inevitable. The conflict that followed was finally won by the party of Qubilai and Hülegü,³⁵ and the acrimony between the two parties reverberated into the West where the relations between Hülegü and Berke were already tense. Hülegü had for some time initiated an internal process of purging all opposition, both concrete and potential, through the repression of the aristocracy living in Ilkhanid territory and loyal to Berke. The imposition of Ilkhanid tutelage in Asia Minor had deprived Jochi's Ulus of some of the most strategic commercial hubs connecting North Africa and the entire Mediterranean basin with the Black Sea and the Middle East. Finally, Berke had converted to Islam and openly accused Hülegü of having conquered the Caliphate's capital by sacking it, humiliating it, and assassinating the Caliph. In the winter 1261–62, Berke's army, led by Nogai noyon, invaded the Ilkhanate in Caucasia, on the line of river Terek. It was only the first act of long conflict.³⁶

From 1236 to the first clash between the two Mongol states, profound political and social changes occurred in Caucasia, especially within the ruling class. The relations between the Mongols and the Caucasian states went through different stages in these years. It was a situation with alternating phases that gradually solidified until it reached the connotations of tyranny and then

34 Berke did not enjoy general approval from the Mongol aristocracy because, although Jochi's son, he was born of the latter's union with the daughter of the Khorazm-Shah Muhammad II. Thus, his authority was weak if compared with the dynastic linearity from which Hülegü came. Broadbridge, *Women*, 231–32.

35 Arigh Böke surrendered in August 1264.

36 Amitai-Preiss, *Mongols and Mamluks*, 79; Mirgaleev, "The Golden Horde Politics," 220; Favereau, "The Golden Horde and the Mamluks," 96–97.

changed into a more equitable system with its inhabitants that encouraged a condition of relative generalized development.

Both Greater Armenia and Georgia had suffered heavily from the wars that took place between 1220 and 1242. Armenia was practically attacked four times by nomadic waves: during the Mongol raid of 1220–21, and by the fleeing Cumans in 1222. The third invasion was the consequence of the strategy (or escape) of the Sultan Jalal ud-Din who, between 1225 and 1230, poured into the Caucasus with a large army and attacked the region conquering cities and ravaging the countryside. A war undertaken by the Sultan against the Mongols that cost considerable losses in human lives and enormous damage to infrastructure in the neighboring regions. The Armenian-Georgian military effort to halt the march put together by Jalal ud-Din (composed mainly of Cumans and Turkmens) was worthless. The fourth invasion was different, however. It took place in 1236 and lasted for almost ten years. This time the Mongols did not manage to pass through. They had carefully planned the conquest of Caucasia. In 1236 the nomads of the steppe started marching until they settled in the Mughan plain, in Azerbaijan, where the Mongols placed their central camp. After the victorious war with the Seljuk, the Mongols had completed the work in the region.

There seems to have been no direct control over politics in Armenia in the first period of Mongol domination. King Hethum welcomed the protection of the Mongols at an early stage. They had to leave the existing institutions for a long time. In his fine doctoral thesis on relations between Armenia and the Mongol invasions, R. Bedrosian wrote that “until 1243 no permanent tax was imposed in Armenia, the conquerors were content with the rich spoils obtained from the many areas taken by military force”.³⁷ In extreme synthesis, one could divide the Mongol domination in the Caucasia into four distinct phases. The first one, which we could place chronologically from 1236 to 1243, corresponded to a somewhat ‘soft’ domination. It was at the height of the war, and the region was literally on its knees: a significant demographic decline, where entire communities were quantitatively reduced, economic stagnation, and a military situation not yet fully stabilized, were factors that made it necessary to have a constant presence in the conquered cities, in order to temporarily replace the recent deconstruction of power. This system, however, did not allow for strict taxation,³⁸ and the new rulers were often satisfied with the loot gathered during the frequent raids.

37 Bedrosian, *The Turco-Mongol invasions*, 117; Kirakos Gandzakets'i, 233–238. Dashdondog, *The Mongols and the Armenians*, 111–20.

38 Most likely, still because of the constant warfare that the region was experiencing, the Mongols didn't even have enough men to leave as garrisons in the conquered cities.

The second phase began with the measures taken by Güyük in 1243. The new Khan deployed taxation and levy officials to all parts of the Empire. These officials had the task of setting up a compulsory tax of one-tenth of all properties. According to Kiriakos, the collectors

Were severe and rapacious men [...]. This Bugha [one of the two officials mentioned by Kiriakos] came with the Tatar army, entered the houses of the nobles, and pitilessly took whatever pleased him. Yet no one dared say anything to him, for he had assembled brigands from among the Iranians and Tachiks who mercilessly performed deeds of cruelty and were especially inimical toward the Christians.³⁹

The other official whose name Kiriakos refers to is Arghun, who was very faithful to Güyük, and traveled far and wide across the Empire to organize the Mongols' tax machine.⁴⁰ We find him in Azerbaijan as early as 1243–44. Then in Tabriz, he received embassies from the Seljuk Sultan and the Ayyubids of Damascus and Aleppo.⁴¹ With the election of Güyük, Arghun was reconfirmed in his post and was put in charge of organizing the tax system of Caucasia. He returned to Khorasan in 1247, in the spring. In April 1248, when the Khan died, Arghun was probably in Talas (today's Jambul in Kazakhstan). In this second phase, local sources, Armenian and Georgian, report the rapacious character of the exactions and the harsh Mongol reaction to any refusal to pay. At the same time, the Mongols established the obligation of military service that every member of the local aristocracy had to perform in the Mongol army in exchange for confirmation of his social status, since he was considered a vassal of the Khan.⁴²

The same members of the local aristocracy who had been granted a specific district to administer had the right/duty to go to the Khan (the Great Khan, in Karakorum) without intermediate filters for each request they had to make. Thus, the Georgian Queen Rasudan was sent Mongol ambassadors

39 Kirakos Gandzakets'i, 260–61.

40 Arghun Aqa (d. 1270) arrived in Khorasan by the order of Empress Töregene in 1241 and soon started a broad plan of administrative reforms. On the figure of Arghun Aqa, see Lane, "Arghun Aqa," 459–82; Pubblici, "Il fattore nomade," 533–50.

41 Boyle, "Dynastic and political," 338.

42 [The Georgian and Aghuanian princes] in accordance with their strength and ability accompanied [the Mongols] on raids with their cavalry and took the cities and fortresses which had not submitted, destroying and enslaving (Grigor of Akner, 5–6); Blake-Frye, "History of the Nation of Archers," 304–305: "they themselves, according to their resources and ability, came with their cavalry with them (the Tatars) on raids, and took the unconquered towns and castles, plundering and taking captive". See also Bedrosian, *The Turco-Mongol invasions*, 120; Dashdondog, *The Mongols and the Armenians*, 90–97.

who ordered her to go to Batu “who was in the northern regions [and] ruled over everyone such that not even the Khan sat on his throne without [Bat’u’s] order; and [emissaries] from the other general named Baiju who was in the Armenian areas”.⁴³ She preferred to send her son David for fear of being “violated”, according to Kiriakos. Following the Khan’s insistence that he wanted the queen herself, she decided to commit suicide rather than comply with the order. David Ulu, son of George Lasha, and David Narin, son of Rasudan, went on this occasion to the Khan Güyük who “legislated that they should rule the kingdom by turns – first Dawit’ son of Lasha Giorg, the elder of the two; then, following his death, his father’s sister’s son, the other Dawit’, son of Rusudan, should he still be alive”.⁴⁴ We know, as already mentioned above, that in fact the kingdom of Georgia was divided into two parts by Güyük and one of each was granted to the two. Again, Kiriakos tells of the journey that Smbat, brother of Hethum I King of Cilicia (r. 1226–1270), made to shower the Khan with “lavish gifts”. He had no problems throughout his journey and was received with all honors by Güyük who granted him numerous districts and fortresses that had already been Armenian, but had later fallen under the rule of the Seljuk.⁴⁵ Finally Kiriakos reports the journey made by King Hethum of Cilicia himself, between 1254–1255, to the Khan, who was already Möngke in those years. It is an extremely interesting and detailed story in which Kiriakos points out that the Khan “gave him a noteworthy edict that no one dare harass him or his country. He also gave him a document proclaiming freedom for the Church everywhere”.⁴⁶ Hayton also speaks of King Hethum’s journey, stating that “in the year of the Lord 1253 Lord Hayton, King of Armenia [...] according to the counsel of his wise men, decided to go in person to the Emperor of Tartars, so that he could more easily acquire his benevolence and [...] make with that everlasting peace”.⁴⁷ It was an extremely onerous situation for the nobles, but all in all, advantageous. They could maintain direct control over the territory, increase their wealth with the military initiatives they were forced to participate in and had direct contact with the Khan (although, for obvious reasons, they could go there once or twice in a lifetime). They were vassals and received a formal recognition of their authority directly from Karakorum.

However, during this period, something happened that partially changed the Mongols’ attitude towards the local population. Between 1248 and 1249, part of the Armenian and Georgian aristocracy convinced King David Ulu

43 Kirakos Gandzakets’i, 262–63.

44 Ibid., 264.

45 Ibid., 265–66.

46 Kirakos Gandzakets’i, 301–09.

47 Hayton, *La Flor*, STHA, 322–24.

to rebel against the Mongols. The initiative could not materialize because the Mongols discovered the conspiracy early on when only a few villages in southern Georgia had joined the would-be revolt.⁴⁸ This attempt at subversion gave birth to a third phase that we could date between 1251 and 1259 during Möngke's Khaganate. His unified vision of the Empire resulted in a precise project of extended taxation. Arghun was again commissioned to travel westwards to organize the new tax system.⁴⁹ Kiriakos describes the taxation of these years with detail in his chronicle. The Armenian historian confirms that "In 703 A.E. [1254] Mongke-Khan and the great general Batu sent an *ostikan* named Arghun, who [earlier] had been ordered by Guyuk-Khan to oversee the court taxes levied from subjugated countries".⁵⁰ On this occasion, the Mongol official went to Greater Armenia, Cilicia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan, as well as to the outlying districts, where "They began recording everyone from age eleven up excepting the women. And they demanded the most severe taxes, more than a man could bear; and people became impoverished."⁵¹

Möngke's reforms were the first – after Ögedei's timid attempts – and the last attempt to create a unified and more effective administrative machine. In fact, after his death, most of the administration became more and more localized. Although complex and still difficult to decipher completely, the tax system adopted by the Mongols consisted of several levels or types of taxation on conquered territories, most of which belonged to the traditional social organization and predated the conquests.⁵² The *qubchur* was a sort of tithe levied on the herds of nomads and only a restricted number of people were exempted. When imposed on the conquered territory and on the sedentary

48 Kirakos Gandzakets'i, 267–70; Grigor of Akner, 9–10; Blake-Frye, "History of the Nation of Archers," 323. The Mongol reaction, according to Kirakos, was furious and they "attacked the Georgian areas falling upon many districts, those which had rebelled and those which had no" (Kirakos Gandzakets'i, 269). In fact, the Mongols executed part of the conspirators, but spared the king.

49 Arghun, an anti-Toluid partisan, was nevertheless tasked with managing the tax system in Caucasia (in Rashid ad-Din, Boyle, *The Successors* cit, p 218: 'Emir Arghun Aqa [...] was granted authority over the countries of Persia, such as Khurāsān, Māzandarān, Irāq, Fārs, Kirmān, Adhrāijān, Georgia, Lūr, Arrān, Armenia, Rūm, Diyār Bakr, Mosul, and Aleppo'). See also Allsen, *Culture and Conquest* cit., p. 19; Bedrosian, *The Turco-Mongol invasions* cit., p. 195. According to the latter, who uses appropriate caution with estimates, the Armenian population of Greater Armenia, thus excluding Cilicia, must have been around 4 million people. For a few months Arghun was accompanied, probably during 1251, on his travels by Juvaini himself. On events related to Arghun and his work as a Mongol official in Iran see Rashiduddin/Thackston, 291–92 and Boyle, "Dynastic and Political History," 338–39.

50 Kirakos Gandzakets'i, 298–99.

51 Ibid., 299.

52 For a thorough explanation of the Mongol taxation system, see Martinez, "Institutional development," 96–99.

peoples, this levy became particularly hard, especially in the rural areas, when applied on the herds of the peasants.⁵³

Arghun was perfectly aware of the need for tax reform that could support and, in part, stimulate reconstruction. On his way back to Derbend, on the Caspian, he set up the *qubchur*, a levy that consisted of direct taxation on pastureland.⁵⁴ It was a harsh and strict tax because the system was badly built. The Mongol officials in charge of the collection rarely took care of them directly. They contracted this service to local personages, often members of the lower aristocracy who carried out their task with great zeal. Those who could not pay were deprived of their children, and those in hiding were killed.

Kiriakos again reveals the role played by the aristocracy of the districts in this type of operation:

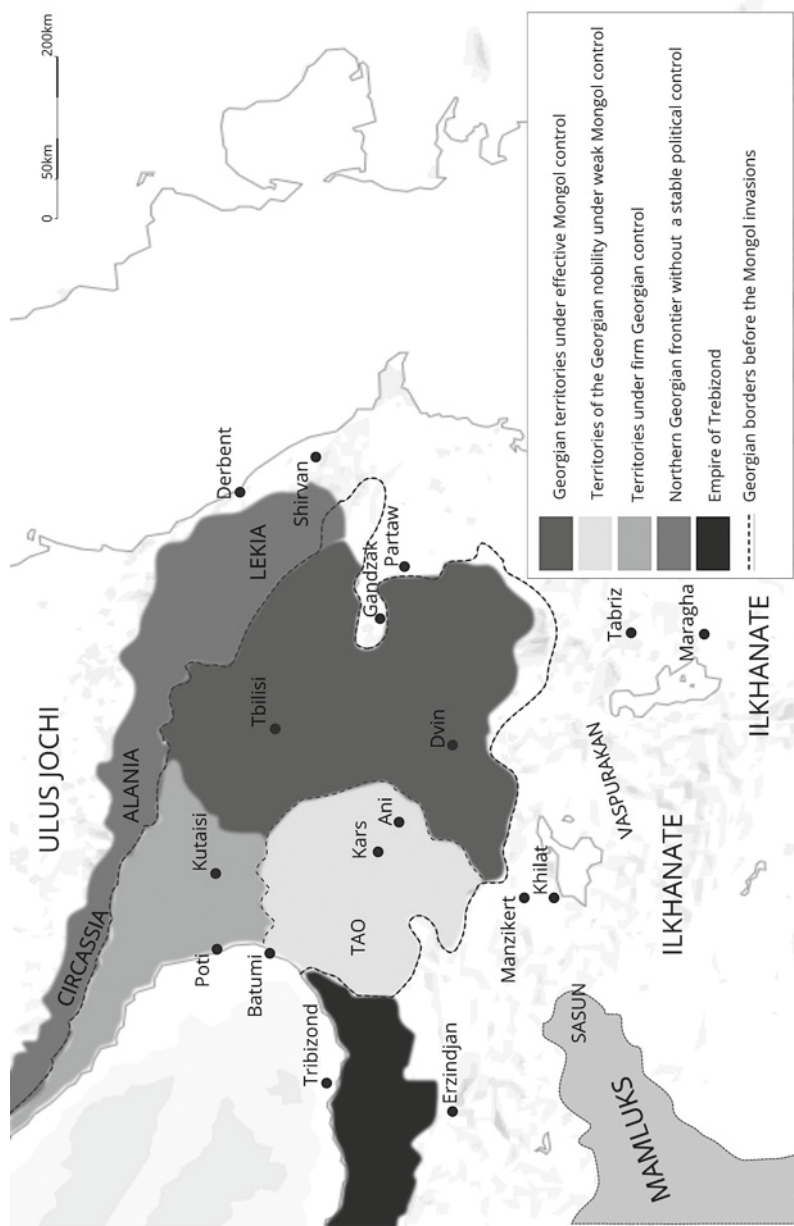
the princes, lords of the districts, became their coworkers in harassing and demanding taxes for their own profit. Nor were they content with just this. Instead, all the artisans (*aruestagets*) whether in the cities or the villages were taxed [...]. They similarly profited greatly from the merchants and heaped up vast quantities of gold, silver, and precious stones. Thus everything became expensive and the lands became filled with lamentation and complaints. Then they left in charge of the lands wicked *ostikans* who demanded the same amount every year by list and in writing.⁵⁵

As in the case of the Golden Horde, the Mongols in Caucasia respected the merchants more than other people. The clergy, if we believe the version of Kiriakos (not disproved by other written sources and indeed confirmed by Russian sources), were exempt from paying any tribute. Before the creation of the Ilkhanate, Caucasia was subjected to intense pressure from the Mongols, in terms of taxation and the massive territorial military presence.

53 However, the most profitable taxation for the Mongols was the one on trade, the *tamgha*. It was linked to the movement of goods and people, which served among other things to maintain the safety of roads and infrastructure. The Florentine agent of the Bardi bank, Francesco di Balduccio Pegolotti, often mentions this tax in his *Pratica della mercatura* (a handbook for merchants) with different names (*tamunga*, *tamenga*, *camunoca*).

54 See for example Juvaini, 34: “[The Mongols have] required [all peoples and all countries that have fallen under their dominion] military service and the equipment of *yams* together with the expenses entailed and the provision of fodder – and in addition to ordinary taxes; and over and above all this they have fixed the *qupchur* charges also”. The Persian historian was aware of the situation of his time. On the doubts that have animated most scholars on the Mongolian imposition of these years and on *qubčur* in particular see Pelliot, “Qubčiri-qubčir,” 154–55. Dashdondog, *The Mongols and the Armenians*, 111–19.

55 Kirakos Gandzakets'i, 299–300.



MAP 6.1 Georgia and the Caucasus after the Mongol conquest

The fourth and final phase of this period can be dated between 1256 and 1261. It roughly corresponds to the creation of the Ilkhanate (although it can be considered as a unified state only after the reforms of Ghazan at the end of the thirteenth century) until the first clash with the Ulus Jochi. Before the establishment of the Ilkhanate, the Mongols had gathered Caucasia into an administrative unit divided into five districts (*Vilayet*):⁵⁶ Georgia/Guristan and Greater Armenia, mostly inhabited by Armenians, constituted the first two. The others were Shirvan, Arran, and Mughan.⁵⁷ Georgia, in turn, had been divided into eight *tümen* (eight districts capable of supplying the army with 10,000 men each). Greater Armenia was instead divided into the Mamikonian *tümen* of Sasun and Vaspurakan with its center in Erzurum. Cilicia was a single unit entrusted to its king, a vassal of the Khan. When Hülegü, with Möngke's blessing, moved west (at the same time as his brother Qubilai – future Khan and protector of Marco Polo – attacked China to the east), he did so by taking a large mass of people with him, perhaps more than Chinggis Khan had done years before. This army included not only the soldiers but also large parts of the Hülegü clan. He chose the coveted Mughan plain in Azerbaijan as his home for himself and his people, with disastrous consequences for the whole region. As mentioned above, Chormaghun and his successor Baiju had chosen this area to plan military operations in the region since 1236.

During the almost twenty years between 1236 and the arrival of Hülegü, the people in Chormaghun and Baiju's armies settled here. They were the families of the Mongol soldiers and of all those who had served in the army during their military operations. Hülegü ordered Baiju to clear the plain. Baiju was an eminent Mongolian noyon, but Hülegü was a member of Chinggis' *oboq*, sent to the West by the Khan in person, so his orders were imperative. Baiju noyon had no choice. A river of people poured into Caucasia, and after moving westward, where he hoped to find land similar to the ones he'd abandoned, he plundered areas already harshly devastated by the war. Sivas, Erzincan, Erzurum, Caesarea, Iconium (Konya) were all areas the Turco-Mongol people passed through while moving.⁵⁸

In addition to this, the creation of a nearby institutional center brought about a drastic change in the legal status of the eminent Armenian and Georgian classes, who became something like the Khan's sub-vassals, forming

56 Ibid., 125. The *Vilayet* were administrative allocations in use in Iranian Persia long before the arrival of the Mongols. In all, there were 17 *Vilayats* in Ilkhanate. (Petrusevskij, *The Socio-economic condition*, 497).

57 Dashdondog, *The Mongols and the Armenians*, 102–03.

58 Bedrosian, *The Turco-Mongol*, 126; Kirakos also talks about it providing details about the dynamics of the events and their consequences (Kirakos Gandzakets'i, 310).

direct vassals of Ilkhan to whom they owed obedience (they were, of course, best controlled by the Ilkhan). The local Armenian and Georgian aristocracy now owed their military service directly to the Ilkhan and had to provide its army with a number of soldiers to meet its needs. This situation soon produced substantial consequences. The forced recruitment among the population had a double effect: on the one hand, it depopulated the countryside with imaginable economic damage; on the other hand, it deprived the territory of an effective defensive system in both political and military peripheral manifestations. It weakened the region from every point of view, which overlapped with an already critical situation. It was not by chance that between 1259 and 1261, a large group of Armenian-Georgian nobles arose for the second time; this time, the initiative was better conceived and organized. The Georgian king David Narin (*the Younger, or the Clever*) led the rebels. After various positive and negative results, this revolt was also quelled by Arghun Aqa with much blood shed. However, the rebellion wasn't a short episode. David's cousin – the illegitimate son of George Lasha, – exasperated by the excessive demands both fiscal and, above all, military on the part of the Mongols, led a second uprising. This time the insurrection was even less successful than the previous one, because the Georgian nobility did not follow the attempted revolt. David Ulu was forced to flee and only in 1262 did he return and accept the Mongol sovereignty.⁵⁹

The task entrusted by the Khan to Hülegü included the attack on Baghdad and the conquest of the Abbasid Caliphate, as well as the definitive suppression of the principality of the Ismaelites of Mazenderan (the Assassins who lived in the strip of territory along the curve of the southern Caspian coast).⁶⁰ The

59 The events are narrated by Kirakos (Kirakos Gandzakets'i, 326–30). The case in question poses a further problem of interpretation. Kirakos clearly states that “the great *ostikan* Arghun mustered numerous troops and went after the fugitive King Dawit', to catch him” (Kirakos Gandzakets'i, 326). In other words, it seems that Arghun was personally involved in the suppression of the revolt. If this is so, then Arghun, who always appears in the sources as a civil administrator, not a military administrator, had military duties, and how very much so. It has always been believed, on the basis of the available sources, that the Mongols had established a sort of dual power in the conquered territories: civil and military, closely connected and on the same hierarchical level, but with slightly different tasks, both directly responsible for their work towards the Khan and whose hierarchical importance changed to the advantage of one or the other according to the political situation of the district in which they operated: in emergency the military official had more power. In the case of Arghun the two powers do not seem to be separate. He is a military officer whose work is mainly administrative. On the duality of the Mongolian administration in the subjugated lands – civil/military – see also Ostrowsky, *Muscovy and the Mongols*, especially ch. 2 of the first part, 36–65 and the table at p. 40.

60 In fact, it is very likely that the expedition foresaw the conquest of Syria right from the beginning. Grousset, *L'empire des steppes*, 427; Rashid ad-Din, trans. Quatremère, 145; trad.

strongholds of the Assassins fell in November 1256; Maimun-Diz was sieged on the 8 and surrendered on the 20. A few weeks later, Alamut surrendered too.⁶¹ Rukn-ud-Din (d. 1257), leader of the sect, was sent from Hülegü to the Great Khan Möngke, but never arrived there; as he was killed during the journey. No one had ever succeeded in destroying the shelters of this armed group that had terrorized merchants and diplomats and had left the Southern Caspian transit route practically in disuse. The Mongols, on the other hand, wiped them out.

Two years later and following an exchange of letters between Hülegü and the Caliph of Baghdad al-Musta‘sim b‘illah (r. 1242–58),⁶² the Mongols faced the Abbasid armies in January 1258.⁶³ Mongol troops, led by General Baiju, reached the outskirts of Baghdad on 22 January. At the same time, another armed detachment under the command of Hülegü approached the western city walls, while a third contingent led by the noyon Ked-Bugha, passed by the southern route, and penetrated the Karkh district.⁶⁴ The siege on Baghdad, an exhausted city,⁶⁵ began on 29 January and ended in early February (precisely on the 13th). The city was brutally overtaken and sacked for seven consecutive days.⁶⁶ On 20 February, perhaps afraid of the influence that the Caliph had

D’Ohsson III, 139; Rashiduddin/Thackston, 342. See Amitai-Preiss, *Mongols and Mamluks*, 23–25.

61 Rashid ad-Din, trans. Quatremère, 145; trans. D’Ohsson III, 197; Rashiduddin/Thackston, 278–79.

62 With which the Mongol Khan intimated his opponent, as usual, to submit. Rashid ad Din has left us a complete account of it; Nasir-ud-Din Tusi (1201–1274), a Persian historian who wrote a detailed account of the events related to the seizure of Baghdad as an appendix to Juvaini’s work, also mentions it. (Wickens, “Nasir ad-Din Tusi,” 23–35; also Boyle, “The death,” 145–61, in particular pp. 150–161); see also Amitai-Preiss, *Mongols and Mamluks*, 22–24.

63 Boyle, “Dynastic and political History,” 346–47.

64 According to Tusi’s account, there were two units employed in the siege of Baghdad, but he is the only source to offer this version: Wickens, “Nasir ad-Din Tusi,” 30. Also because the Mongols, as usual, attacked utilizing the three wings: central, right and left.

65 Baghdad, the capital of the Abbasid Caliphate, was weakened by growing anti-Shiite violence. Furthermore, from the 1240s, the city was struck by several floods that undermined the solidity of its walls that the Treasury never repaired.

66 According to Bar Hebraeus (*The Cronography* 471–75; Wickens, “Nasir ad-Din Tusi,” 33–35; Boyle, “The death,” 150–61; Kirakos Gandzakets’i, 313–20; Hayton, *La Flor*, 325–326). The death of the Caliph was traumatic and is told in a different way by Muslim and Christian sources. The latter speak of an execution with the sword (by Hülegü in person rather than by one of his *noyons*); Muslim sources tell of a practice that was used by the Mongols because it was closely linked to their religious beliefs: the caliph was wrapped in a carpet and kicked to death: Juzjani, (*Tabaqat-e Naseri*, 1252–53); Wassaf, *Geschichte* 1, 79; Boyle, “The death,” 150. For the Mongols shedding the blood of a nobleman, even if he was a foreigner, was an affront to the land which would rebel and produce calamities and

in the Islamic world, Hülegü ordered the execution of all the male members of the Abbasid family, included al-Musta'sim.

The conquest of the city was a terrible blow to Islam. Some scholars have insisted on the disastrous consequences of the fall of Baghdad and the simultaneous devastation brought by the Mongols to the region for the Middle Eastern economy. The consequences of this event were undoubtedly negative; war never produces wealth in the regions where it takes place; especially if it continually goes on for over thirty years (and there is no doubt that the way the Mongols took Baghdad had a tremendous impact on the demographic balance, on the infrastructure of the entire surrounding area and the perception of the event by contemporaries). However, if we read the Arab and Persian travel reports of the period prior to the Mongol conquest, we realize that the region was already experiencing a moment of crisis in the second half of the twelfth century mostly due, to a considerable extent, to the effects of the earliest Turkic incursions into the Middle East.⁶⁷

Shortly afterwards, Hülegü attempted to conquer Syria and Mamluk Egypt. The initiative has not yet found a convincing explanation. In fact, after having achieved the real objective of the military mission, that is, the Caliphate of Baghdad and the annihilation of the Assassins, Hülegü had no apparent reason to go as far as Egypt, since the risk of facing strong and well-organized armies was very real. There was also the problem of entering the orbit of the Western Latin Empire and moving too far away from the center of the Khanate of Persia. One possible motivation could be the sharp personal acrimony between Hülegü and the Ayyubid sultan of Aleppo Nasir Yusuf,⁶⁸ but it certainly can't justify such a costly military campaign. Rashid ad-Din says that Chinggis Khan

mourning against the transgressor people (see also Grousset, *L'empire des steppes*, 360). Polo (*Il Milione* XIX, 113–14) provides an erroneous, legendary version of the *aurum sitisti, aurum bibe*, whereby the caliph would be locked in a tower and left to starve with his treasure. A similar version is given by Hayton (Hayton, *La Flor*, 326) according to whom “[Hülegü] commanded that he should be locked in a chamber and then throw the pearls and gold, so that he might feed on them to his satisfaction, nor bring him anything by chance [...]”.

67 And the Crusades. See for example Ibn Jubayr, *Viaggio*, 149–160. Already Ashtor recognized, in his essay (*A Social and Economic History*, 262–295, in particular p. 265) that a process of decadence was underway long before the Mongols began their western campaigns. For a thorough examination of the Middle Eastern trade routes' evolution before and during the Mongol invasions, see Sinclair, *Eastern Trade*, 21–35.

68 Grousset, *L'empire des steppes*, 434. This hypothesis is also reported, with some skepticism, by Boyle (*The History*, 350). The fact is that after the sack of Baghdad, Nasir Yusuf, together with his cousin Malik Kamil, ruler of Mayyafariqin, had broken the submission agreement reached with the Mongols, being unwilling to tolerate the humiliation inflicted on the caliphal capital.

had immediately thought of the conquest of all peoples “from the borders of Amu-Darya to the ends of the countries of Egypt”,⁶⁹ but this statement seems to be an acquisition *post quem*, and is not mentioned in the Secret History. As John A. Boyle hypothesized, the reason for this initiative could be the persuasive talk by the Armenian sovereign Hethum I against Hülegü.⁷⁰ The Christian Hethum feared the close presence of the Muslim kingdoms, and the latter saw a dangerous appendix on the Mediterranean in the Armenian state. The Armenians likely hoped for the support of the Latin Empire, which in Syria consisted of the principality of Antioch’s coast, the county of Tripoli, and the kingdom of Jerusalem (excluding the city).

Furthermore, if the Kingdom of Jerusalem was in the hands of the local aristocracy in the south, the northern part (Antioch and Tripoli) was of Bohemond VI, son-in-law of Hethum. A possible defeat of Egypt would have brought critical economic advantages to Lesser Armenia and Caucasia as a whole. The objective of this Mongol expedition was, since the beginning, Aleppo. In fact the Mongol army, made up of numerous Armenian and Georgian elements⁷¹ from the districts where military service was compulsory, penetrated Aleppo on 24 January 1260. The siege lasted about a month, after which the city fell, causing panic in the region among the Muslims. Bohemond of Antioch (d. 1275),⁷² who had participated in the initiative, received the territories he had lost due to the Saladin campaign as a reward. On 1 March, Damascus fell, and the government was placed in the hands of a Mongol governor. In the summer of 1260, the Mongol troops, again with the broad participation of the Armenian and Georgian aristocracy, penetrated as far as Gaza. On this occasion, similar to a few years earlier, the Great Khan Möngke

69 Grousset, *L’empire des steppes*, 427.

70 Amitai-Preiss, *Mongols and Mamluks*, 11–14. We could consider, among the hypotheses put forward in this regard, the fact that Hülegü has always been considered pro-Christian. In all probability he did not have a solid religious self-consciousness, unlike his first wife, and stepmother Toghush Khatun (d. 1265). She was a woman highly esteemed by the Great Khan Möngke, but she was above all the granddaughter of the last van-Khan of the Kerait who had long embraced the Christianity of Nestorius. A large part of the favorable Hülegü’s attitude towards the Christians were likely due to her influence. Rashid ad-Din/Thackston, 64, 175; Melville, “Doquz (Doquz) Kātūn”; De Nicola, *Women in Mongol Iran*, 91–94. On the importance of Toghush Khatun for the protection of Caucasian Christians see Dashdondog, *The Mongols and the Armenians*, 155–56. On Hülegü and Islam see Biran, “The Islamization,” 79–88.

71 A Georgian contingent also reportedly participated actively in the capture of Baghdad (Kirakos Gandzakets’i, 315–16); Amitai-Preiss, *Mongols and Mamluks*, 26.

72 Bohemond submitted to the Mongols in 1260, probably advised to do so by his grandfather, King Hethum I. Jackson, *The Mongols and the West*, 117–18.

died (11 August 1259), and Hülegü had to participate the *quriltai*. He left command of the military operations to his trusted general, the noyon Ked-Bugha.⁷³ Weakened by the withdrawal of troops that had to follow Hülegü, the Mongol army found itself facing the Egyptian counter-offensive (supported by Latin wards, arrived from Acre and largely made up of mercenaries) in ‘Ayn Jālūt and for the first time faced a harsh defeat; it was 3 September 1260.⁷⁴

The defeat suffered under these circumstances had a twofold political effect. On the one hand, it strengthened the presence of the Mamluks in Palestine and Syria by forming a buffer against the potential Mongol incursions into that region and what it represented (above all, the strategic position of the region overlooking the Mediterranean). On the other hand, it forced Hülegü to look towards the north, where his relatives in the Golden Horde believed that the Ilkhanate was moving too far into Caucasia. In addition to this, Berke had converted to Islam and did not tolerate the massacre perpetrated on Baghdad in 1258 by Hülegü’s troops.⁷⁵ A fratricidal clash was looming between the two Mongolian states. In addition to religious and ideological reasons, tensions formed primarily over the political determination to gain control over Transcaucasia because of the wealth of its territory and its strategic position, carrefour of the most frequented trade routes that connected the Mediterranean basin to Asia.⁷⁶

5 The Ulus Jochi

[Batu] was a king who had no particular inclination to any creed or religion: he recognized only faith in God and did not blindly follow any sect. His generosity was beyond all calculation, and his liberality was unbounded [...], and the merchants brought him all manner of merchandise from everywhere, and he took everything and doubled the price several times over. And he would issue drafts on the Sultans of Rum and

73 Kirakos Gandzakets'i, 325; Hayton, *La Flor*, 327–28; Bar Hebraeus, *The Cronography*, 436.

74 Boyle, “The death,” 351; Amitai-Preiss, *Mongols and Mamluks*, 39–45.

75 Berke’s ascension to the throne of the Golden Horde (the first Mongol khan to convert to Islam) marked a turning point in the history of the Jochi Khanate and in the complicated network of international relations that also involved all the powers established in the region: Venice, Genoa, the Mamluk Sultanate and the Byzantines. Furthermore, Hülegü was accused of taking the decision without consulting the other Mongol nobles before the destruction of Baghdad and the execution of the Caliph. Rashid ad-Din, trans. Quatremère, 393; Grousset, *L’empire des steppes*, 475; Mirgaleev, “The Golden Horde Policies,” 218–19.

76 Amitai-Preiss, *Mongols and Mamluks*, 78–91.

Syria and grant them *jarligh*; and none of those who came to visit him would leave without having achieved their purpose.⁷⁷

This description of Batu, by Juvaini, reflects rather well the character of the Khan as far as is known from other sources however, is not entirely impartial. Batu seems to have been an extremely attentive man to the needs of merchants and his people in general. He was well aware that after the devastation produced by the constant state of war in which he had helped to throw Rus' and the Northern Pontic steppes, it was necessary to begin a structural process of reconstruction that could make the territory and the cities productive again.

As we saw in the previous chapter, the territory where the Ulus Jochi would later arise was what Chinggis Khan granted to his eldest son, Jochi.⁷⁸ With his death in 1227, a few months before his father, possession of the Golden Horde passed to Batu, his second son, and grandson of Chinggis. The people of *Batu*, his *oboq*, ruled there until 1359. Unfortunately, on the economic and social history of the Golden Horde, we do not have the same knowledge as we do for the Ilkhanate. On the latter and its socio-economic conditions – as well as on the institutions that governed it – we have the stories of Rashid ad-Din and Juvaini, who, as leading officials of the administrative system in the Ilkhanate, are an extraordinary testimony for their completeness and reliability. Rashid was in the service of the Ilkhan Ghazan and was personally responsible for the reforms promoted by the Mongol sovereign and their implementation. Juvaini was governor of Baghdad during the reign of Hülegü. It is precisely at the time of the innovations introduced by Ghazan that are documented in more detail.⁷⁹ Likely, some institutions adopted by the Mongols in Southern Caucasasia were the same in the north, but it is necessary to be cautious in this regard.⁸⁰

Since the first conquest of the Northern Pontic steppes, the Mongols introduced a decentralized and diversified control system.

77 Juvaini I, 300. On Batu see also the description provided by Rashid ad-Din in several passages of his *History* (Boyle, *The Successors*, 56–57, 59–60, 107–10, 119–22, 200–03).

78 And in fact, it would be correct to call it ulus Jochi rather than Golden Horde. This name is a Russian definition of the 17th century (probably the first to use it was the merchant Kotov who travelled to Persia in 1624 and in his story uses the term *Zolotaja Orda*, but we do not know the reason for it). In contemporary sources, even Russian ones, the term Horde is used to designate the camp, the city, sometimes the capital. Mis'kov, *Politicheskaya istoriya*, 53–54; Pubblici, “Rus’/Russia,” 302 and n. 8.

79 Petruševskij, *The socio-economic conditions*; Luisetto, *Armeniensi*; Melville, “History and myth,” 133–60; Lane, *Early Mongol Iran*.

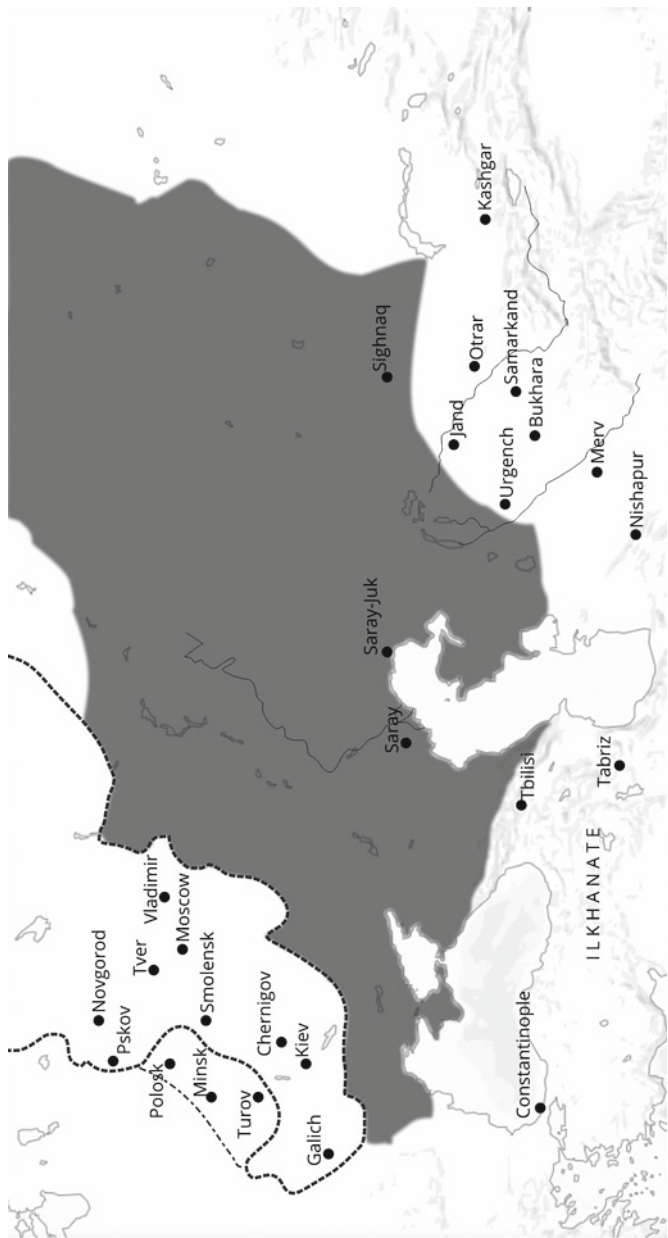
80 In their work on the Golden Horde Grekov and Jakubovskij often and consciously overlap the two models. Sometimes it seems a stretch.

The vastness of the territory to administer and the institutional differences they found there, forced the new rulers to adopt methods of government that changed from region to region. Often the local organizational forms and modes of management were left intact, sometimes replaced or modified, giving rise to new institutions that were the result of a fusion between the indigenous and the external elements. For example, in the steppes inhabited by the Cumans, the Mongols completely supplanted the system they found. Every single administrative unit, be it a village community rather than a town assembly, was destroyed in favor of the institution of local, Mongol governors, who had the task of managing the community they had been assigned and trying to collect taxes.⁸¹ However, in the region roughly corresponding to the extent of Kievan Rus' they acted differently. They did not suppress the forms of power that they found there, instead, let the Russian princes continue to govern their states, but imposed the presence of Mongol tax collectors (*basqaq* and *daruga*) in the cities to whom the Russian sovereigns, in the first years of domination had to fully adhere to. Novgorod' had an even different fate. The Mongols never attacked it and acted in an extraordinary way towards the northern principality. Novgorod' remained in the hands of the Russian prince, without the conquerors imposing on him the presence of any fiscal official, but the city had to recognize Batu's sovereignty.⁸² Taxation and military levy were entirely at the prince's expense, who was to all intents and purposes a vassal of the Golden Horde Khan and owed obedience to him.

The northern region, where the Mongols had found the Russian principalities, with their towns and institutions, was not altered. After an initial period, local officials automatically became the Russian princes. As we said above, they were obliged to accept the presence of a Mongol official to control the levy. In the rest of the Ulus Jochi, the ruling class was all chosen among the noyons who belonged to *Batu's oboq*. They were closely linked to the Khan, owed him loyalty and service, and in return, obtained a benefit, a land including the people who lived there. However, they had no connection with it. Most of the time, they did not even reside there permanently; therefore, it was an established practice to transfer territorial control into the hands of third-party officials who had strong territorial roots afterward. Most of the time, they were Mongols in charge of a given territory (that they had received because

81 See Vernadsky, *Political and Diplomatic History*; Ostrowsky, *Muscovy and the Mongols*, 36–63; Spuler, *Die Goldene Horde*, 300–60.

82 "In that year [1257] bad news came from Russia, that the Tatars demanded tamga and duties from Novgorod, and people were very agitated all year round". (PSRL I, 278–280; Mitchell and Forbes, *The Chronicle of Novgorod*, 95–96).



MAP 6.2 The Ulus Jochi in the 1260s

of military merit during the most recent *quriltai*) and could reside in the area they had received. The former Northern Pontic steppe – inhabited mainly by Qipchaqs – came to constitute a unitary space, a puzzle composed of many small territorial entities, each closely linked to the seat of the Horde Khan (Sarai, on the lower Volga) and constituted by itself an autonomous military unit. The noyon that governed a district was required to provide the Khan with a certain number of soldiers (generally a *mingghan*, a thousand, and sometimes a *tümen*).⁸³ The *bukaul* figure also belonged to the military ruling class. He was a high official who distributed the troops, their destination, and the dislocation of the soldiers. He checked that there were no exceptions to the traditional system of distribution of the spoils, and he was responsible for every single *tümen*. The noyons who commanded a district capable of supplying a thousand soldiers were directly responsible to the *bakauls* for their work.⁸⁴

Even in the Ulus Jochi, the administration was divided between military and civilian; the latter was used mainly for the material tax levy. In written Russian sources, the term *basqaq* seems to indicate the military officer and the term *daruga* (*darugachi*), the civilian administrator. In the Russian principalities, fiscal and administrative decentralization was a rather early phenomenon. Yaroslav II (d. 1246), brother of Yuri Vsevolodovich and prince of Vladimir', was awarded the title of "first Russian-speaking prince" by Batu as early as 1243 so in the aftermath of the Mongol conquest. Yaroslav thus had full power over the territory around Vladimir Suzdal' as well as in Kiev.⁸⁵ Shortly afterward, in 1250, the Prince of Galich Danijl (d. 1264) followed the example of Jaroslavslav. Then, as we have said above, he had to do the same thing with much more difficulty to Aleksandr of Novgorod' (Nevsky).⁸⁶ The Russian prince was directly

83 The division of the Ulus Jochi into military districts – *tümen*, *migliaio*, *centenario* etc. – named after the *noyon* in charge of them is confirmed by the Venetian notarial deeds drafted in Tana in the mid-fourteenth century. See on this Pubblici, "Venezia e il mar d'Azov," 450–51; Pubblici, "Experiencing Alterity".

84 Grekov and Jakubovsky, *The Golden Horde*, 99. The Mengli Hirei's yarlyk of 1453 with reference to Crimea speaks about this figure. It is a document published by Veselovsky in number xxiv of *Zapisky Vizantjnsky Očerki* but, having failed to find the volume, I quote second hand here.

85 The throne of Vladimir was, at this time, the most powerful and prestigious. Halperin, *The Mongols*, 52–53; Grekov and Jakubovskij, *L'Orda d'Oro*, 182; Mitchell and Forbes, *The Chronicle of Novgorod*, 87–88.

86 Novgorod' was a rich city; it had been for years the center of lively commercial traffic with the Baltic cities and the Byzantine Empire; it had very solid city institutions (the *veče*, the city assembly, could veto the prince's decisions) so that people did not accept the imposition of a tax from outside; it was intolerable for them to accept the rule of a foreign authority. Nevsky had to use force several times to prevent outbreaks of revolt from spreading into open guerrilla warfare in the city.

invested with this authority by the Golden Horde Khan or, indirectly, by one of his officials (sometimes he could be the *Metropolite*). As we have seen, the prince was supported in managing the territory by a Mongol official; in the earliest years, it was almost always a *basqaq*. Written sources mention this figure less and less as time moves on, and if in other areas of the ulus it becomes rare, in Russian territories, it disappears completely.⁸⁷

The Mongols made extensive use of the military to support local rulers in the conduct of public affairs in the aftermath of the wars of conquest. There were material urgencies that had to be faced. It was necessary to aim for a rapid pacification of the conquered areas and an economic and cultural recovery. The presence of the military official, who could intervene on behalf of Khan when necessary and maintain public order, was instrumental to this emergency. Once the level of tension in the areas subject to the more or less direct domination of the Mongols dropped, the military officials were definitively replaced either with members of the local aristocracy alone or with other officials from outside the military.⁸⁸ The prince reigned over Russian lands only if he possessed the Khan's *jarylygh*. The *jarylygh* was a written decree by which the Khan granted immunity, tax exemption and authority.

The Mongols were a minority in the lands of the Ulus Jochi. Passages from Chinggis Khan's testament show that Jochi was assigned no more than 4,000

87 This issue has aroused a lively historiographical debate so that some scholars have considered the disappearance of the term from the sources as the end of the use of the practice itself. Likely, between the end of the thirteenth century and the first twenty years of the following, the *basqaqs* were gradually removed in the conduct of the state (along these lines Grekov and Jakubovskij, *L'Orda d'Oro*, 181–182, but also Ostrowsky, *Muscovy*, 42–43).

88 On this position Donald Ostrowsky (*Ibid.*) argued that if the political situation allowed it, it was the Khan's practice to grant a certain autonomy to local vassals – i.e., Russian princes – so that they could better fulfil their tasks and flow tax revenue into the empire's coffers without problems. This system allowed, on the one hand, to stimulate the local aristocracy to peace in exchange for a large administrative autonomy, and on the other hand, and as a consequence of the former, to allow the Khan not to constantly keep the armies in alarm to quell revolts. Naturally, in this period, the Mongols did not exclude themselves from the life of the Russian principalities, nor from the narrow streets into which they had divided the vast territory of the steppes. Some points were indispensable to them. The local rulers had to provide for the imposition and collection of taxes to the extent that this was established by the Golden Horde Khanate; they had to provide soldiers when the Khan requested them (emblematic is the case of the war between the Golden Horde army and the Ilkhanid army in the 1260s); they had to accept Mongolian officials sent periodically to Russian lands guaranteeing them protection while carrying out their fiscal control tasks etc. The obligations were therefore not lacking, but the lasting absence of a Mongol official to control the work of the princes was significant and had beneficial effects on reconstruction.

Mongols for the colonization of his ulus.⁸⁹ The army with which Batu brought his conquests to completion was composed mainly of Mongols, but they were soon overwhelmed by the neat demographic predominance of the Qipchaqs. Also, a strong, albeit minority component of the army consisted of men who had fallen into slavery during previous campaigns. After the acquisition of the Russian territories, the army was easily integrated with the influx of people from the districts, both in the land inhabited by the Qipchaqs and Russian principalities. It is no coincidence that the steppes' territory had, in a relatively short period, become *turkified*.⁹⁰

The relationship between the Russian principalities and the Golden Horde is hard to interpret. It is a problem that has long challenged specialists who have never reached a common interpretation. The main question is whether modern Russia is heir, and to what extent, to Rus' and above all, what role the Mongol invasions played in this process. It is not the task of this work to deal with this problem. I will simply observe that after a relatively short period, i.e., between 1240 and the early fourteenth century, Russian principalities and the Golden Horde followed different paths. While the Ulus Jochi underwent a slow but inexorable disintegration, the Rus', or what remained of it, was involved in the development that, at first glance, materialized around the new center of Moscow. The division that matured in the Golden Horde had profound consequences in the Azov region. Eastern Crimea was an integral part of the Horde, but it greatly benefited from its division, increasing its importance for the merchants who came from all over Europe. The development and the wealth achieved by the Venetian and Genoese settlements in Tana (the Easternmost of the whole Italian trade system) is one of the most interesting aspects to investigate in its origin and its subsequent manifestations. At the mouth of the Don, Nogai, a faithful exponent of the family of Jochi, established his residence. He was the true author of politics in the Golden Horde during the Khanate of Tulabuqa (1287–1290). The Azov region experienced its gravest moment during the government of Toqtai (r. 1291–1312), who first arrested the Genoese residents of Sarai (1307) and then attacked Caffa in 1308 with disastrous consequences for the town of Crimea. Only upon Toqtai's death, the Latins were allowed to return to the region.

At the end of the thirteenth century, the Mongol unity was over. The geography of an entire continent had substantially changed. Much of Asia was in the hands of Mongols. Eastern Europe had undergone extensive destruction and struggled to recover. Batu's ulus extended to the eastern part of Hungary

89 Grousset, *L'empire des steppes*, 469.

90 Halperin, *Russia and the Golden Horde*, in particular ch. III and VII, 21–32 and 75–86.

and had control, albeit indirectly, of all Russian principalities in the north. Crimea and the entire northern coast of the Black Sea were part of the Ulus Jochi as far as the Danube line in Dobruja. The Balkans constituted, together with the reconstituted Byzantine Empire, a rupture in the geographical continuity that the Mongols had established around the Black Sea. Asia Minor was under Mongol control, with the Seljuk Sultanate constricted to loyalty to the Ilkhanate. Lesser Armenia had managed to maintain substantial independence from the strict Mongol authority, but the new rulers were a vassal state. Caucasia was utterly subjugated. The east coast of the Black Sea was in Mongol hands but divided between two opposing powers whose influence was divided by the Caucasian range: to the north, the Ulus Jochi; to the south, the Ilkhanate. It was a completely new geographic and political configuration: an immense territory under the formal authority of a single power. Early disagreements arose within the different Khans for the domination of the neighboring territories (in the second half of the thirteenth century, Batu's successor Berke claimed his right over part of the Khorazm and did not hesitate to start a war against the ulus of Chagadai that legitimately possessed that region). Above all, the weakness of the established political system led the Mongol Empire to represent a unity that objectively did not exist. The Empire built by Chinggis Khan and his successors had also broken the veil under which the Orient, in particular Central Asia and its commercial vitality, stood.

It is no coincidence that European penetration in these regions, from now on, steadily increased, even if, later on, it had to deal with the political instability of the various districts. Caucasia suffered, in addition to the devastations following the wars, the trauma of the early Ilkhanid collapse (with the death of Ilkhan Abu Said in 1335, the Mongol Empire of Persia entered an inexorable phase of decline from which it never fully recovered until it finally collapsed under the blows of Tamerlane's army).

In the Golden Horde, the situation was different. The Russian principalities already by the mid-fourteenth century no longer went to pay homage or receive the Khan's *jarlygh* to rule over their territories. The decline of the Ulus Jochi was slower than that of Ilkhanate, and this was due to three different factors. First, the Golden Horde, unlike the Ilkhanate, was divided from the beginning. Batu had no interest in dealing directly with the Russian princes. The Mongols found in the steppe an ideal territory for themselves, while the Russian forests were a barrier, mentally much more than physically, but still a hindrance to expansion in the north. They were not attracted to an environment they perceived as alien.

Moreover, the territory they administered was vast, and at a certain point, they preferred to make sure that the Russian princes did not mature into

revolt rather than establish themselves as allies in close contact with them; hence Rus' enjoyed substantial autonomy from the earliest years of Mongol domination. Then, and again because of the distance, the regions directly under the Khan's control benefited more than the others from economic (trade) immigration. The governor of Solgat, who supervised the administration of Crimea on behalf of Khan, became rich with the traffic that passed through Tana, Caffa, Soldaia, and the other commercial outposts. These riches contributed to rapid and more lasting development, a cause, and effect process of increased general security that almost consistently characterized certain regions. Not only Crimea but also the district of Sarai, on the Volga, was the center of flourishing commercial traffic, which, taking the merchandises from the Caspian basin, brought them to the North and vice versa. The commercial link between Sarai and Turkestan was critical too.

Finally, the political genesis of the two khanates, the Golden Horde and the Ilkhanate, should not be underestimated. The Golden Horde was the result of a campaign wanted at all costs by the headquarters of the Empire. Batu received the best resources to accomplish the task. Moreover, and above all, when Batu realized, thanks to the intelligence of his generals, that it was not the right moment to extend the domination to Hungary, he backed off. The Ilkhanate found instead in the Mamluks an impossible obstacle to overcome and had to be wary of this enemy (who would eventually defeat them again).

The religious factor in Caucasia and the Mediterranean was fundamental. The attacks in Baghdad, Damascus, and Aleppo had humiliated the Muslims of the region. At the earliest opportunity they wanted to take their revenge, and from this point of view the Mamluk victory over Hülegü was an incentive for all the faithful of Islam not to surrender to the idea of an invincible Mongol army. In the Golden Horde, this was a minor problem. The religious factor was an important one for the Russians, but in the steppes where Batu founded the capital it was marginal. The Cumans did not have a collective identity based on religion such that they could have called thousands of individuals to arms under an ideological flag. The Russians, for their part, even though they were religiously humiliated, were partly compensated; on the one hand with the rapid tax exemption reserved for the clergy and on the other with the bland religious control to which the Khan subjected the Russian area.

Apart from these considerations, the Golden Horde is still in many ways an historical mystery, and for all the suppositions one can make, it is hard to make a definitive one, especially in the light of such a complex phenomenon as it presents itself to the historian. In this case, it would be useful to underline that the balance of power established in the immense territory of the Ulus Jochi produced a rapid fragmentation of power, giving rise to a series of independent

zones of influence. The Azov was, together with Crimea, the region that benefited more than any other from this process. For Caucasia, the picture was different. Trafficking developed and played an essential role in the *renaissance* of that area, but the higher pressure exerted by the center on the periphery constituted a brake upon commercial development. Everywhere, however, the growing volume of business created around the Black Sea attracted the Mongol governors, who for a long time, supported and stimulated trade and were aware of the profit they could make from it.

The frantic succession of peace followed by fierce conflicts, both within each of the two political entities and between each other, never definitively discouraged Western merchants. The nomads had favored the rebirth of a lively urban structure that could, for the first time in centuries, confront a world hitherto unknown. The Mongol government had beneficial effects on international trade, which only after the opening of the East was able to enter distant markets. Following the widespread devastation caused by the war, this condition of development had very positive consequences, especially for external operators. Western merchants could approach markets they had reached poorly and only indirectly up until this point. They had straight access to commodities that were rare in western markets and that gave rise to international trade on a large scale. The local population, and the merchants, in particular, proved capable of realizing good profits; nevertheless, the wars that preceded this period made a local recovery quite difficult.

The Religious Factor and the Problem of Integration after the Conquest

1 Cultural Premises

When dealing with the Mongol's attitudes and policies towards religion in the conquered territories, the temptation is to follow a dominant historiographical tradition, which presented these people as somewhat tolerant of their subjects' various confessions. As always, things are more complicated and articulated.

In the early years of domination, the Mongols applied a general religious tolerance to the conquered populations because this was the will of Chinggis Khan. The founder of the Empire had explicitly ordered that no religion should be favored over another because this would have undermined the very unity of the conquests and risked provoking hostility among the local populations who had already endured years of conflict and destruction. From the highest echelons of the court to the aristocracy active in the territory, the first generation in power respected the will of Chinggis Khan. After one generation, things began to change, due to several factors, mostly related to the proximity of the Mongol ruling class with the local population, with the conquered leading institutions, both from political and religious. The practice of government drove the Mongols to confront different cultures, and the agents of conversion¹ were numerous. So, a rarefied first phase, characterized by disordered conversions to local creeds – many Khans were Nestorian Christians and khatuns even more so – was followed by a more structured conversion process. From the 1260–70s, the first conversions to Islam appeared, both in the Chagadaid ulus and in the Ilkhanate. Later on, Islam also spread to the Jochid ulus. By the 1330s, all the Mongol uluses were ruled by Muslim Khans and a mostly Islamized aristocracy.

Some passages from the *Historia Mongalorum* or the *Itinerarium*, but also the chronicle of Rashid ad-Din, Juvaini, and the *histories* Armenians chroniclers, speak of a substantial lack of interest of the Mongol ruling class in religious matters. Thus in Juvaini, we read that “[Chinggis] being the adherent of no religion and follower of no creed, he eschewed bigotry, and the

¹ According to a brilliant definition by P. Jackson, “Reflections on the Islamization,” 361–67.

preference of one faith to another, and the placing of some above others”.² In John Plano Carpini, we read that “as far as we know they have never forced anyone until now to deny their faith or their law, except in the case of the already exposed Michael”.³ For Grigor Arknerts’i, “they had no religion except for felt images which they carried with them for witchcraft. They were in awe of the sun, as though it were a divine power”.⁴ Hülegü, the first Ilkhan of Persia, was not at all flexible towards the Muslims of the region. Sartaq (r. 1255–1256), Batu’s immediate successor, followed the same line, being Nestorian.⁵ Arghun, Hülegü’s eldest son, was favorable to the Christians; his brother Tagüder (who ruled as Sultan Ahmad), however, was particularly hostile to them after he had embraced Islam.⁶ When Ghazan was elected Ilkhan in 1295, he had already been converted to Islam for about four months. His view on religious policy was not precisely tolerant; he systematically persecuted Christianity. In short, this is a very complex problem. One can, however, try to draw a general picture of the relations between the new institutions and the old ones, between the ruling class in the cities and districts and the population that had to suffer the choices of the latter.

The Mongols burst into the West with violence, upsetting a pre-existing complex administrative and infrastructural system in just a few decades. This characteristic makes the incursions of these people different from other medieval invasions, which might otherwise appear similar. For example, the

2 Juvaini I, 26.

3 Giovanni di Pian del Carpine, *Historia Mongalorum* III.5, 343. The “already exposed Michael” is Michajl Vsevolodovich, prince of Kiev and elected in 1245, by Batu, prince also of Chernigov. Called before Batu, he was forced to bow to the idol representing Chinggis. He refused and was beheaded together with one of his soldiers. As Paolo Daffinà rightly pointed out in his notes to the *Historia Mongalorum*, “the much asserted religious tolerance of the Mongols must be understood in a very relative sense” (Giovanni di Pian del Carpine, *Historia Mongalorum*, 415, note 5 to chapter III). Another example of the poor tolerance shown by the Mongols towards what they considered intolerable, is in Plano Carpini, who recounts what happened to the widow and brother of Andrej of Chernigov. He, prince of the town of the same name and son of Mstislav III Romanovich, was accused of cattle theft and had killed by Batu’s order. His brother, little more than a teenager, and his widow, went to the Mongolian Khan to ask for justice; in response, Batu’s men “put the young man on her screaming and crying and with a peremptory and unconditional order forced them to unite” (Giovanni di Pian del Carpine, *Historia Mongalorum* III.6, 344).

4 Grigor of Akner, 2; Blake-Frye, “History of the Nation of Archers,” 289: “They had no kind of religion save idols of felt, needed for sorcery, which they always carried with them, but they paid reverence to the sun, as a manifestation of divine power”. On the Armenian attitude towards the Ilkhans see also Dashdondog, “Amernian Hagiography,” 373–84.

5 Jackson, “Reflections on the Islamization,” 369.

6 Ibid., 373.

so-called *barbarian* invasions did not constitute a disruption of the old system, but a gradual and complicated process that placed two profoundly different political and cultural systems one in front of the other. From this point of view, the Mongol invasions had a multifaceted impact on Caucasia. It had to deal with balances firmly based on religion. Islam and Christianity constituted an ideological pillars for the subjugated populations. The Mongols had a different attitude towards the two confessions, wavering and characterized more by the orientation of the individual Khans than by a planned religious policy or, as has often been said, by general tolerance. The problem linked to the attitude of the Mongol Khan towards the confessions has often been simplified by presenting this general picture: Chinggis and Ögedei were convinced shamanists, Güyük had strong pro-Christian sympathies, and Möngke was extraneous to all matters linked to worship.

In contrast, Qubilai and Hülegü would have been Buddhists, the first a convinced and early supporter of the Oriental religion, the second a late discoverer, and a lazier believer.⁷ In order to have an exhaustive picture of the attitude that the Mongol Khans had concretely towards the various confessions they had to confront, it would be necessary to investigate every single area and every single period of Mongol domination – in the Caucasus as in the North, in Central Asia as in China. The attitude of the foreign ruling class towards indigenous confessional groups was very different over the years between Caucasia and the Azov region.

One of the most evident consequences of the Mongol conquest was the progressive but inexorable process of acculturation between the conquerors and the people of the areas where they settled. This process was all to the disadvantage of the Mongols. The vastness of the territory that they subjugated was inhabited by ethnolinguistic groups that did not always correspond to similar cultural identities. In Caucasia, for example, in relatively small spaces, there were three dominant confessional groups very different from each other and all deeply rooted in the social fabric of the context to which they belonged: Christians, Muslims, the paganism of the Qipchaqs, plus areas where shamanic practices were firmly rooted. The arrival of the Mongols had, from this point of view, a “delayed” impact. The violent invasion of the Mongol army and the creation of new institutional structures changed the organization of power on the one hand and left the cultural physiognomy of the subjugated

7 This is a quite widespread opinion among historians and in particular among Islamists; see for example what Alessandro Bausani wrote in his fundamental study *Religion under the Mongols*, p. 540. Hülegü conducted a pro-Christian policy, however; in this the contribution of his wife, a Nestorian by training, was probably decisive, as mentioned above.

populations almost intact on the other. On the contrary, sometimes Mongol rulers strengthened their exclusive identity to be more precise because of the terror transmitted by the systems of conquest and the devastation that followed the military operations.

During the more than two centuries of government, the Mongols were not able to impose a hegemonic cultural trend; local cultures resisted the imposition of new cultural norms. The ruling classes, when they consisted of Mongol functionaries, often absorbed the cultural influence of the regions in which they operated, and the same happened for the Khans. The Mongol shamanism did not constitute an element of collective self-recognition; on the contrary, this was a characteristic very present among the subjugated peoples. Shamanic practice is closely linked to the natural environment in which it is born and takes strength. Monotheistic worship, such as Christianity and Islam, tended instead to isolate belief from unforeseen and unpredictable influences of the natural *environment*. In the two great monotheistic religions, there is – to a very different extent – standardization of worship, creation of neutrality, where this element was completely absent among the steppe nomads. Furthermore, the Islam of the Ilkhanate and the Christianity of Rus' were a powerful social glue that was alien to Mongol and nomadic culture in general. However, in the case of the Mongols, the cultural supremacy of sedentarism did not correspond to political superiority, at least in the earliest decades of domination.⁸

The Mongols were pagans and shamanistic practices were deeply rooted within their culture.⁹ Chinggis Khan was tied to the original Mongolian cult, but never did the Mongols have a social vehicle in their religious beliefs; from this point of view, the 'constructed' ethnicity of the Mongols (that is, the imposed collective ideology we have analyzed in chapter four) played a decisive role.

"With the friendly help of my father-qan and the *anda* Zhamuka, with multiplied forces from Heaven and Earth, called by the mighty Tenggeri, and with the help of Mother Earth ..." ¹⁰ These words, pronounced by Temüjin in thanks to the natural elements and his friends after defeating the Merkits, show the

8 See on this the sharp analysis of Golden, "Imperial Ideology," 75–76. The most complete and profound analysis of the religious factor in the Northern Pontic steppe is DeWeese, *Islamization*. See further, par. 3, for a more detailed bibliographical explanation.

9 Giovanni di Pian del Carpine, *Historia Mongalorum*, in particular ch. III; William of Rubruck, *The Mission*, 176, 187. Rubruck describes the second wife of Möngke, Qotai, as pagan (*The Mission*, 195); on the image of the Mongols as pagans in Georgia see Pritula, "A Hymn on Tiflis," 217–38.

10 SSM III.113, 94.

character of the Mongols' religious beliefs on the eve of unification (therefore still in the late twelfth century). Kiriakos Gandzakets'i, in the thirteenth century, maintains that

There is no religion or worship among them, but they frequently call on the name of God in all matters. We do not know (nor do they) if this is to thank the God of Being or some other thing that they call god. However, usually they say that their king is a relative of God. God took heaven as his portion and gave earth to the Khan, for they say that Chingiz-Khan, the father of the [present] Khan was not born from the seed of man but that a light came from the unseen [...].¹¹

According to John Plano Carpini, who visited them in 1245, the Mongols believed in one God (the Sky) who "they think is the creator of all things visible and invisible, and they believe that He is the dispenser, in this world, of both good and evil".¹² However, the Mongols that Plano Carpini visited venerated the sun, moon, fire, water, and earth and "offer them first fruits of food and drink".¹³ They made extensive use of idols of cloth, silk and felt generally made by women.¹⁴ In the wagon they placed in front of the camp, they used an idol representing the "first emperor".¹⁵

Juvaini is very clear in stating that Chinggis was not "a partisan of any religion or follower of any creed [...]; on the contrary, he honored and respected the learned and venerable of any sect, for he recognized in such behavior the way to God's Court".¹⁶ It is evident, however, that the strong territorial rootedness and the nomadic nature of the traditional Mongol society included a capillary presence of shamanistic beliefs and practices even in the social complex's lower strata.¹⁷ For example, one of the terms that often recur in the *Secret*

11 Kirakos Gandzakets'i, 234–35.

12 Giovanni di Pian del Carpine, *Historia Mongalorum* III.2, 342.

13 Ibid., III.5, 343.

14 Ibid., III.3, 342; William of Rubruck, *Mission*, 72–73.

15 Giovanni di Pian del Carpine, *Historia Mongalorum*, III.3, 343, whereas the "First Emperor" is obviously Chinggis Khan.

16 Juvaini I, 26. Probably Juvaini exaggerates here because if it is true that Chinggis Khan did not have a creed that he respected with devotion it is equally true that the Mongol pagan rituals were familiar to him and he frequented them often. It seems that here the Persian historian overlaps his image of the Ilkhanid Mongols at his time with the reality of the Chinggisid times over a century earlier.

17 Humphrey and Hürelbaatar, "Regret as a Political Intervention," 9ff.

History is *beki* (*biki/beki*), which, according to Bartold¹⁸ and Vladimircov,¹⁹ would designate a sort of sorcerer, a “chief priest”.²⁰ It was a highly regarded figure among the tribes that Rashid ad-Din calls foreigners, the Merkit and the Oirat. The *beki* was an eminent figure in the Mongol social hierarchy. In the army, the *beki* occupied the right of the Khan, like a prince of the blood.²¹ One passage of the *Secret History* says that: “There is a tradition among us Mongols to raise to the dignity of *noyon*, of *beki*, those who deserve it ... the dignity of *beki* is inherited from the eldest of a family [the *beki*] pointing out and deluding us over years and months”. The *Secret History* goes on to define the symbology to which the *beki* was to be subjected: “When he is bestowed with the dignity of a *beki*, let him wear a white fur coat, be put on a white horse and then sit on a throne”.²² Therefore, this figure seems to pre-exist Chinggis Khan’s unification and belong to a long and deep-rooted Mongol tradition. He was often the oldest *noyon* in a family where there was more than one.

Already in the thirteenth century, one would think that the religious aspect was by now confused with individual daily practices rather than constituting an element of identity; in Juvaini, for example, the figure of the *beki* is completely absent. Nonetheless, based on the information provided by Plano Carpini, the figure of the sorcerer who assisted individuals with disregarding certain practices is still present in the mid-thirteenth century. If someone voluntarily breaks one of the ritual rules (such as beating the horse with spurs, killing or capturing young birds and more) he is executed.²³

On the role of women within Mongol magic-religious rituals, Kiriakos’ account is partly confirmed by Plano Carpini that they were a kind of witches who “divine everything”.²⁴ Among the most deeply rooted beliefs, the Mongols had a rather concrete conception of the post-mortem; for them, there was a world similar to the earthly one in which “flocks grow, eat, drink and do whatever other things in this world are made by living persons”.²⁵

18 Bartold, *Turkestan*, 391–92.

19 Vladimircov, *Le Régime social*, 61.

20 Atwood, *Encyclopedia*, 347.

21 Vladimircov, *Le Régime social*, 62; Bartold, *Turkestan*, 391.

22 SSM IX.216, 191.

23 “Si autem aliter, oportet quod pecuniam multam solvat incantatori qui purificet eos, et faciat et stationem et ea que in ipsa sunt, inter duos ignes transire, sed antequam sic purificetur nullus audet intrare nec de ipsa aliquid exportare”. Giovanni di Pian del Carpine, *Historia Mongalorum* 111.7, 239–40.

24 Kirakos Gandzakets’i, 236–37.

25 “Greges multiplicent, comedant, bibant et alia faciant que in hoc seculo a viventibus hominibus fiunt.” Giovanni di Pian del Carpine, *Historia Mongalorum* 111.9, 240; *Ibid.*, Note, 415, n. 8; on the concept of life after death among the Mongols also Roux, *La mort*; Roux,

The lack of written culture and the consequent import of it from the Uighurs (through the Naimans) had probably influenced the devotional character of the Mongols in general and the Chinggisid in particular.²⁶ The Uighurs were mostly Nestorian (even the Naimans, who lived in contact with them for a long time, adopted Nestorianism) and succeeded in penetrating Nestorian Christianity among the Mongols. The region inhabited by the Uighurs remained a Nestorian majority even after the conquest. A patchwork of confessions among which only Judaism was absent coexisted there.²⁷ According to John Plano Carpini, they were mainly Nestorian,²⁸ while according to the Persian author Awfi, some of them were Christians,²⁹ others worshipped the sun. Buddhism was very present.³⁰ The sources do not show any reason for the contrast between the different confessions within the complex Uighuric world. One might think that Buddhists, Christians, and pagans lived together peacefully.

On the other hand, religious uniqueness and some ethnic homogeneity, for the steppe nomads, are misleading concepts. As we have seen in talking about their origin, the Mongols were a small part of a very elastic, fluid ethnic universe, within which self-identity was a concept under construction. So, the Chinggisid Mongols hated the Tatars for a long time until they were utterly defeated, but ten years later we find them together attacking Khorazm; in addition to this, the two groups started a long process of assimilation so that Western observers (and not only) called the Mongols all Tartars.³¹

"Les astres"; M. Waida, *Central Asian Mythology of the Origins of Death*, "Antropos", LXX-VII, 1982, pp. 663–702; Id. *Myths of the Origin of Death: The Central Asian Type*, "Temenos", XVIII, 1982, pp. 87–98; the practices described by John of Plano Carpini are confirmed by the account of Kirakos Gandzakets'i, (234–38).

26 See on this, and on the Nestorian influence in Eastern Asia, De Rachewiltz, "Prester John," 59–74.

27 Bartold, *Turkestan*, 388.

28 Giovanni di Pian del Carpine, *Historia Mongalorum* v.8, 255–56: «Chingis [...] contra terram Huyrorum processit ad bellum. Isti homines sunt christiani et de secta Nestorianorum erant».

29 Bartold, *Turkestan*, 388.

30 See Brack, "Rashid al-Din," 215–37.

31 This is a controversial point, as it is not clear why the Mongols were perceived and metabolized by others as Tatars/Tartars. While the Western assimilation of the word Tatar with Tartar, i.e. coming from Tartarus (from hell), is more than probable, it remains to be understood whether, by believing Rubruck, this is due to the Mongols' use of Tatars as vanguards in military operations (Guillelmus de Rubruc, *Itinerarium* XVII.6, 125) or whether this was due rather to the fact that the Tatars were a majority component in the armies fighting in Europe and China, without necessarily having been the vanguards or at

The Keraites, once allies of the Mongols, soon became their mortal enemies and were therefore attacked and defeated. The Naimans are often presented to us as adversaries in the *Secret History*. However, the cultural debt of the Mongols towards this tribe is very considerable and acknowledged by Mongol or pro-Mongol sources (and if this is true, as demonstrated by the *Secret History* and not only, it seems difficult to think that after the military confrontation between them, the two peoples have not experienced a process of assimilation). That is, the steppe world was an area where specific cultural categories familiar to us do not stand in any way. Not only was the ethnic-religious identity weak, but at the same time, the complex of daily practices that characterized the life of the population of this indistinct region was very strong. The rituals presented by our sources are not only incomprehensible to our narrators but also inhomogeneous, far from any normative codification. They had an individual dimension and did not constitute a collective binder. The cult was both an object and an oral vehicle.

Regarding the role played by the Uighurs in many aspects of Mongol cultural formation, when Chinggis Khan had not yet completed the unification, the *Mission* of William of Rubruck is very informative. He left us many details about the Uighurs' Buddhist practices, for example, when he states that "For there behind a chest, which for them acts as an altar and on which they put the lamps and the offerings, I could see a statue with wings rather like St Michael, and others resembling bishops, with their ringers held as if in blessing".³² According to the Flemish friar, the Buddhists prayed facing north, with their hands joined, kneeling on the ground and resting their foreheads on their hands, "For this reason the Nestorians in these parts will by no means put their hands together when praying, but pray with their palms outspread in front of the breast".³³ The information provided by Rubruck confirms the presence of practices strictly related to cosmography. The Buddhist temples "are laid out in an east-west direction, and on the north side they build an alcove which projects rather like a choir".³⁴ There are many examples of this type in the *Itinerarium*.³⁵ William of Rubruck's journey dates back to the early 1250s, so the information contained in it is a portrait of a situation immediately following the conquests, a privileged observatory, from this point of view.

least not only them. See Giovanni di Pian del Carpine, *Historia Mongalorum*, 426–27, n. 5 and William of Rubruck, *Mission*, 10–11.

32 Ibid., XXIV.2, 151 and n. 1; also Van De Wyngaert, (Guillelmus de Rubruc, *Itinerarium*, 227 and n. 2).

33 Ibid., XXIV.5, 151–52.

34 Ibid., XXIV.5, 152.

35 Ibid.

2 **The Mongols, Islam, and the Armenian-Georgian Christianity until Ghazan's "Choice" (1220–1295)**

In the early years of the thirteenth century, Caucasia was a very diversified region from a religious point of view. Georgia was a vast kingdom whose official religion was Greek rite Christianity, the same can be said for Armenia (Monophysite), or rather for those areas conquered by Georgia, but whose population was mostly Armenian, such as the districts of Kars, Ani, the Erzurum region and the areas around Lake Sevan. Asia Minor consisted of the reconstituted Empire of Nicaea, Christian, the Muslim-Sunni Sultanate of the Seljuk Turks of Iconium, Lesser Armenia, or Cilicia officially Christian, and the small Empire of Trebizond, Christian. The rest of the region including Azerbaijan, the Arabic Peninsula, and Iranian Persia was Muslim (Ayyubids, the Caliphate of Baghdad, with a strong predominance of Sunnism). Beyond the Caucasus mountains lived the nomadic, pagan, steppe peoples: Alans and Qipchaqs. To the north were the Russian Christian principalities. After the conquest of Caucasia and the Northern Pontic steppes, the Mongols found themselves in the middle of an authentic monotheistic "encirclement".

The Mongol ruling class was limited to using popular devotion in a way that was instrumental in controlling economic trends, public order, and institutional reorganization after the devastation produced by military campaigns. As sources suggest, the religious aspect seems to have been the smallest of their problems, at least in appearance. Islam, in its different doctrinal currents, dominated the region where the Ilkhanate would arise. Christian Georgia and Armenia, Azerbaijan, the Muslim Caliphate, and the Rum Sultanate lived in constant conflict long before the Mongols arrived; a long war due to strategic reasons rather than doctrinal disputes.³⁶

Nevertheless, the solid religious identity of the Georgians, as well as the Muslim states, contributed to exacerbating the climate of enmity in the region. The Mongols carried out their military operations in an area where religious sentiment was closely connected with the exercise of power, a practice thoroughly alien to their culture. Until the 1250s, the Mongol conquests were the consequence of a unitary strategy intimately matched to a unitary ideology: the leading class of the first generation after Chinggis Khan's death, led by Ögedei carried on a universal project of submission, necessary because the

³⁶ Even though the popular perception of conflict was often channeled to the religious aspect.

subjugation of all the peoples and their obedience to the Great Khan, constituted a pillar of the Mongol religious system.³⁷

If it is true that the Khan had a predetermined mission as the will of Sky (Tenggri), it is equally valid that the power given to the Khan passed through the people and their needs. It was a cult of the hybrid ruler, somewhere between supernatural and earthly, spiritual and temporal (where, as we have seen, spiritual power was the prerogative of the shaman). In any case, Heaven's will, as imperative for the Khan, and at the same time, his supreme legitimation, will be elaborated only from the khanate of Güyük.

During the years of domination, the indigenous realities, in Caucasia and the Azov region, met the conquerors through the filter of fear that prevented an equal cultural exchange. This was true for Islam as it was for Monophysite Christianity, for Nestorianism as it was for paganism. The relations between the Mongols and Islam went through, like the others, very different fluctuations over the years. Almost the entire Middle Eastern region at the time of the Mongol invasion was officially Sunni.³⁸ The events of 1258, with the seizure and sacking of Baghdad and the killing of the Caliph, threw Islam into terror; it was an unprecedented situation because the domination of a non-Muslim force, in fact, at the beginning decidedly hostile to Islam, represented an absolute novelty for Sunnism.³⁹ The death of the Caliph, killed by the Mongols of Hülegü, had a twofold practical effect. If, on the one hand, the Sunnites found themselves for the first time without their prime spiritual and political referent,⁴⁰ on the other, this beheading favored the strengthening of the Shiite current in areas of traditional Sunni majority.⁴¹ Furthermore, the elimination

37 On the Mongol imperialistic idea see Voegelin, "The Mongol orders," 378–413; Richard, "Ultimatums," 212–22; Sagaster, "Herrschaftsideologie," 223–42; Allsen, *Mongol Imperialism*.

38 It was especially so among the ruling class, since the popular strata were predominantly Shiite.

39 Bausani, "Religion under the Mongols," 538.

40 On the confusion of the caliphal prerogatives there are various testimonies. In his diary the Syrian diplomat Jamal ad-Din, who was in Italy at the court of Manfred in 1260, calls the pope "the Caliph of the Franks" (Bausani, "Religion under the Mongols," 540). The Tunisian historian Ibn Khaldûn (1332–1406) referring to the role of the Caliph says that he "acts as vicar of the Legislator [Muhammad] [...] the Legislator is invested with a double task: spiritual, since he must transmit religious obligations to the people and make them act in harmony; and temporal, as responsible for the interests of human civilization (*al-'umrân al-basharî*)" (Ibn Khaldûn, *Discours*, 338–39). However, we must note that in the second half of the 13th century the temporal authority of the Caliph was reduced to an almost total formality, while the spiritual influence was still very strong.

41 For the role of Islam in Seljuk Persia see Bausani, "Religion in the Saljuq Period," 283–302 and Peacock, *The Great Seljuk Empire*, 246–65. After the battle of Ayn Jalut, the Caliphate moved to Cairo under the Mamluk protection and the Jochid khan Berke formally

of the 'heretic-ci' Assassins of Alamut, freed orthodoxy from a not insignificant obstacle.

From 24 to 30 January 1260, the Mongols raged against Aleppo, ruled by an Ayyubid governor; according to Abu'l Feda's account, it was a massacre.⁴² The capture of Baghdad had had an immediate outcome in Syria and Palestine. The participation of Hethum I of Armenia and Bohemond VI in the military operations led to a clamorous imbalance between the harassment of the city's Muslims and the systematic salvation granted to the Jacobite Christians of the Syrian rite. The Mongols of Hülegü fell with violence in Damascus too. Although the city surrendered without a fight, Mongol General Ked-Bugha ordered the execution of the city governor. We see again with Abu'l Feda, we note that the Christians were allowed to consecrate a Mosque to the Church of Christ, which the Sunnis of Damascus had already built from a Greek Orthodox church.⁴³ Armenian sources on this are silent.⁴⁴ In any case, from the conquest of Baghdad to the massacres perpetrated in Syria among the Muslims of the region, a climate of panic spread. A tension that is perhaps one of the leading causes of the Mamluk expedition to these lands and the victorious battle that the Egyptian troops fought against the Mongols of Ked-Bugha. After the Mamluk counter-offensive in Syria, the Muslims of the region obtained considerable revenge against the Christians who had leaned on the Mongols.

In Caucasasia, and more generally in the Ilkhanate, the religious policy suffered the influence of Mediterranean events. As said, the attitude of Mongol officials in religious matters was determined above all by the changing convictions of the Khan, who always oscillated between shamanistic traditionalism, Nestorianism, and Islam. There is no doubt that Hülegü, the first Ilkhan, was pro-Christian and we have already set out the reasons that lead us to believe this; this anti-Islamic tendency would cost him dear when Berke, allied with the Mamluk Sultan, declared war on him and did so using as a pretext Hülegü's closeness to Christianity as opposed to Berke's recent conversion to Islam. The choices made by the Ilkhan, however, should not be taken as dictated by a fervent religious sentiment. Political and religious motives were very well distinct in the minds of Mongol rulers in this period. The attack on the symbols of

recognized it. Mirgaleev, *The Golden Horde Policies*, 222; Favereau, "The Golden Horde and the Mamluks," 93–96; Favereau, "The Golden Horde and the Mamluks: The Birth," 302–26.

42 Abu'l Feda, *Résumé de l'Histoire*, 140–41: "The massacre and looting lasted until Friday 14 Safer, when Hulagu had the carnage stopped and a general amnesty proclaimed"; Grousset, *L'empire des steppes*, 436.

43 Abu'l Feda, *Résumé de l'Histoire*, 143.

44 Kirakos dedicates just few lines to the capture of Aleppo and Damascus (Kirakos Gandzakets'i, 324–25).

Islam were a consequence of political calculation, rather than of the desire to eliminate the Muslims of the region. The fact remains that when Hülegü died, things changed considerably and abruptly for Caucasian Christianity. Before Ghazan's election to the throne of the Ilkhanate, there was a substantially favorable period for Christians. Abaqa, son of Hülegü, was a Buddhist like his father but showed substantial tolerance towards Armenians, Georgians, and Syrian Jacobites. He was the protector of the Nestorian patriarch Mar Denha⁴⁵ and married Maria, daughter of the Byzantine emperor Michael Palaeologus.⁴⁶ He was a tenacious opponent of Mamluk Egypt and had to fight it while the Mongol army of the Chagadaids was advancing in the East.⁴⁷ Abaqa was perhaps the first Mongol to seek an alliance with the Western powers seriously, and without ideological boundaries. The new political picture required diplomatic stabilization, at least with the Latin West. The first concrete attempt at an anti-Mamluk collaboration with Europe took place between 1267 and the following year.

In two letters addressed to Pope Clement IV (of which only the second survived),⁴⁸ Abaqa proposed that the imperial army should join that of Michael Palaeologus, his father-in-law, attacking the Mamluks from the West while he, with his army, would hold them from the East. The plan never came true.

Between May and June 1274, Abaqa sent two ambassadors to the Pontiff Gregory X on the occasion of the Second Council of Lyon, where the unification of the Roman and the Byzantine Churches was to be discussed. In 1277 the Ilkhan sent two more diplomats to the court of Edward I of England to conclude a treaty of alliance against the Mamluks.⁴⁹ He received no response.

Abaqa died shortly after the defeat of the Mongol-Armenian army on 30 October 1281, against the Mamluks.⁵⁰ Abaqa was succeeded by Tagüder (r. 1282–1284), who had a Christian background, but was the first Muslim Ilkhan who assumed the name of Sultan Ahmad. The two years he ruled were the prelude to the shock that he would bring to the political, economic, and even cultural structure of the Ilkhanate since Ghazan in 1295. According to Hayton, Tagüder was the enemy of Christians and ordered that “all Christian churches shall be destroyed”; he persecuted the Christians at the point where the Great

45 Borbone, *Storia di Mar Yahballaha*, 18–19 and several other times in the text. Ibid., 349–72; Grousset, *L'empire des steppes*, 442.

46 Sinor, “The Mongols in the West,” 27; Boyle, “The Il-Khans,” 25.

47 Amitai-Preiss, *Mongols and Mamluks*, 129–33 and 183–201.

48 E. Tisserant, “Une lettre de l’Il-khan,” 547–56.

49 Grousset, *L'empire des steppes*, 445–46; Amitai-Preiss, *Mongols and Mamluks*, 95–105.

50 Hayton, *La Flor*, 335–36.

Khan Qubilai had to intervene to order him to mitigate his position.⁵¹ Between the death of Tagüder (1284) and the coming to the throne of Ghazan, Arghun (pro-Christian, 1284–1291) and Geikhatu (r. 1291–1295), a slightly disliked member of the ruling clan, ruled the Ilkhanate. Geikhatu was assassinated during a palace revolt in March 1295. During the reign of Arghun, the Chinese monk Rabban Sauma, together with Rabban Marco, traveled to the West to Italy and France. Rabban Sauma's journey is narrated in an extraordinary document preserved to us and found in the nineteenth century in the Tyari. It is a Syriac manuscript that has been reprinted in many editions⁵² and through which we can reconstruct not only the story of the two Nestorian monks but also of the Eastern Church in the last years of the thirteenth century, especially in Persia. Ghazan converted to Islam in June 1295, during the conflict against his cousin Baidu (d. 1295)⁵³ and finally prevailed in October, when entered in Tabriz and became the seventh Ilkhan.

During the rule of Ghazan, the Ilkhanate's religious policy underwent a neat and long-lasting change of direction. Ghazan was a prominent figure in the political life of the Mongol State; his fiscal reforms changed the way of life of many subject regions for the better, and from a religious point of view the new Ilkhan did not leave a lighter mark. He became a devout Muslim, and his choice profoundly influenced government policy in religious matters. Many state leaders, governors, emirs, ministers, converted and this conversion was at the basis of a substantial stiffening of the ruling class towards diversity: systematic persecution of Christians and Buddhists began, but also towards those minority cells of worship (such as those who remained tied to shamanist practices and Zoroastrians).⁵⁴ Rashid ad-Din makes it clear that when "the Lord of Islam, Ghazan" became Muslim "an edict was promulgated that all the temples

51 Ibid., 336. In fact, and albeit a fervent *believer* (according to Rashid ad-Din's portrait), Tagüder did not conduct a policy of forced islamization of the State. On Tagüder and his conversion to Islam see Amitai, "The Conversion," 15–43; Pfeiffer, *Conversion to Islam* and DeWeese, "Cultural Transmission," 19–20.

52 The first edition was published in 1888 (P. Bedjan, *Histoire de Mar Jab-alaha, patriarchs, et de Raban Sauma*, Paris 1888); the text was successful and was republished several times, in addition to the second edition of Bedjan in 1895. I used the Italian edition edited by P.G. Borbone, *Storia di Mar Yahballaha* cit., to which I refer to the bibliography and the excellent commentary. See also Borbone, "The History of Mar Yahballaha", 349–72.

53 Baidu was placed on the throne in March 1295, after the assassination of Arghun, by a group of conspirators led by amir Taghachar (d. 1296). See on this Jackson, *The Mongols in the Islamic World*, 70–73 and 82–86; Hope, *Power, Politics, and Tradition*, 147–53.

54 Zoroastrianism was very rooted in the Khorazm where Avesta placed the mythical Paradhâta dynasty. The Prophet's family itself is traditionally associated with the Eastern Iranian region because of its origin.

and places of worship of the *bakhshish*,⁵⁵ as well as Christian churches, Jewish synagogues, should be destroyed in Tabriz, Baghdad and other places of Islam”⁵⁶ and that non-Muslims should also be converted by force.⁵⁷

Later, adds the Persian historian, given the impossibility of converting to the true faith by force, Ghazan let everyone profess their creed: “I will know that those of you who desire it, go to India, Kashmir, Tibet or any of your native countries. Those who remain will not have to practice hypocrisy [...], but if it comes to my ears that someone is building temples or idols, I, without hesitation, will pass it on to the edge of the sword”.⁵⁸ So it seems clear that the Khan was trying to maintain strict control over those who were controllable, over the upper social strata, who lived around the court. As for the spread of Islam in the villages and, more generally, among the lower classes, such control was inapplicable. One could not go to every village to check how many times people went to the mosque or to be healed by a shaman.

Supported by his trusted Emir Nawruz (d. 1297), also a devout Muslim,⁵⁹ Ghazan was particularly efficient in destroying churches, synagogues, and Buddhist temples.⁶⁰ The mints produced coins with images of the Prophet and from May 1299 usury, particularly opposed by Islamic doctrine, was prohibited. According to the Persian historian Khwandamir, author of *Habigu's-Siyar*, at the end of 1297, Ghazan had no less than five princes and thirty-seven emirs killed because of their reluctance to Islam.⁶¹ She was Shiite from the beginning, like her son and successor Sultan Öljeitü (r. 1304–1317). Despite the choices made by the Ilkhans, the fragmentation within Islam in general and Sunni Islam, in particular, disoriented the Mongols. This situation did not prevent the population of Muslim faith from a strong doctrinal coherence. Most of the Persian ruling class remained Sunnite even during the reign of Ghazan, and the general tolerance of the Ilkhan for the Shiism.

55 The term is used to indicate the Buddhist masters.

56 Rashid ad-Din/Thackston, 439.

57 Ibid., 464; Bausani, *Religion under the Mongols*, 542.

58 Rashid ad-Din/Thackston 471 and 543.

59 Nawruz was the son of Arghun Aqa and succeeded him as governor of Khorasan. In 1289, he rebelled against the Ilkhanate and for years was a formidable enemy of Ghazan. He surrendered and submitted to the Ilkhan only in 1294. Nawruz joined Ghazan's army marching on Tabriz and was probably under his advice that Ghazan converted to Islam. Nawruz was eventually replaced by Qutlagh Shah (d. 1307). Hope, “The ‘Nawrüz King,’” 451–73; Jackson, *The Mongols and the Islamic World*, 170.

60 Browne, *A History of Persian Literature* 1, 40; Jackson, *The Mongols in the Islamic World*, 369–70; Boyle, “Dynastic,” 380.

61 Browne, *A History of Persian Literature* 1, 41.

The historical centers of Sunnism, Isfahan, and Shiraz, besides Baghdad, proudly resisted the aristocratic pressures (of all those officials operating on the territory who had, for convenience, converted to Shiism). From this point of view, the conversion of Ghazan represented a novelty: if the Seljuks had always been pro-Sunni, the tendency of the Ilkhanate was the opposite, and this partially mitigated the repercussion deriving from the Caliphate overthrow. From a current of resistance, Shiism became the Ilkhanate's official Islam of the ruling classes. Furthermore, it was during the Mongol rule that Shiite theology reached its definitive canonization. Concerning the population, with a Sunnite majority, there was no widespread abuse, apart from the earliest years of the reign of Ghazan. There was a substantial balance between the majority current at the popular level and the official one adopted at court. Sunnism was too strong and rooted in these regions to be supplanted by the antagonistic creed only because the ruling house adopted it officially.

Caucasian Christianity welcomed the arrival of the Mongols in a situation of grave economic and political hardship but unprecedented "ideological" cohesion. The sources reveal a strong sense of collective identity, unity against the "barbarian invaders," conveyed and made concrete by the Christian faith; the two different Armenian and Georgian confessions seem at this moment to lose their polemical crisis in the face of a greater danger constituted by the arrival of the Khorazm-Shah first and then the Mongols.

The physical description of the Mongols given by the Christian sources reinforces the distance between "us and them", between the members of the Community and the *barbarian* strangers. Grigor of Akner writes that

The first who came against our country were not like [ordinary] people. They were awful to see and impossible to describe. They had large heads, like a buffalo, narrow eyes like a chick, short noses like a cat, protruding chins like a dog, narrow waists like an ant, and short legs like a pig [...]. Death does not appear among them, and so they can live for three hundred years.⁶²

According to Plano Carpini they have exceptionally wide faces, a prominent jaw, small eyes and nose, and have almost no beard.⁶³ Kiriakos Gandzakets'i

62 Grigor of Akner, 3; Blake-Frye, "The History of the Nation of Archers," 295–297.

63 Giovanni di Pian del Carpine, *Historia Mongalorum* III, 232: "Inter oculos enim et inter genas plus quam alii homines sunt lati. Gene etiam satis prominent a maxillis; nasum habent planum et modicum, oculos habent parvos et palpebras usque ad supercilia elevatas. Graciles sunt generaliter in cingulo, exceptis quibusdam paucis; pene omnes

describes the Mongols affirming that they “had no beards, although some of them had a few hairs above their lips or on their chins. They had narrow and quick-seeing eyes, high, shrill voices; they were hardy and long-lived.”⁶⁴

As we have seen, the period before the incursions of Jalal ud-Din and the Mongol army was particularly favorable for Christian Caucasia, which experienced a vigorous economic development under Georgian pressure. Queen Tamar, a fervent Christian, financed the construction of churches, monasteries and gave them lands, entire villages. At the end of the twelfth century (around 1191), therefore, the “marvellous *vardapet* and his monks then began work on the construction of a monastery and church in the above-mentioned Tandzut valley, by order of the great prince Iwane. They built a beautiful wooden church which was consecrated in the name of saint Gregory.”⁶⁵ Again, in the same year, a church was built in Nor, consecrated to St. John the Baptist,⁶⁶ and it was granted “[extensive] land bounded by streams [extending] from mountain to mountain, as well as a mine in Abasadzor, and Zoradzor in the district of Bjni, and Ashawan above the monastery.”⁶⁷

The Sultan’s raid reinforced the anti-Islamic sentiment of Christianity in the region, essentially unifying the link between the Armenian cities and the Kingdom of Georgia. Kiriakos, an Armenian and cleric by profession, did not hesitate to take Georgia’s side when it was attacked and defeated by Jalal ud-Din’s troops. On the other hand, the tension between Islam and Christianity was definitely broken. During the capture of Tbilisi by the Sultan in 1226, many Georgians preferred death to forced conversion.⁶⁸ After conquering Gandzak, the military garrisons left to guard the city surrendered to all sorts of harassment of the civilian population.⁶⁹ Muslims mainly populated the city, and the Christians were a minority, not even too tolerated if we believe the words of Kiriakos.⁷⁰

Through the story of the Armenian monk, we can observe again the situation in the areas with a Christian majority immediately after the first Mongol

mediocris sunt stature. Barba fere fere omnibus minime crescit: aliqui tamen in superio-ri labio et in barba modicos habent crines, quos minime tondent”.

64 Kirakos Gandzakets’i, 233.

65 Ibid., 174; The church was placed under the direct protection of King George, father of Tamar, who granted it two villages: Abasadzor and Tandzut, as well as a vineyard in Mijnnashen (Kirakos Gandzakets’i, 175).

66 Kirakos Gandzakets’i, 176.

67 Ibid., 180.

68 Ibid., 188–89.

69 Ibid., 189–90; this attitude is also confirmed by Juvaini (II, 480–81).

70 Kirakos Gandzakets’i, 198: “[The city] was a major enemy of Christ and his veneration, insulting and cursing the Cross, mocking and despising priests and assistants”.

conquest: “worship was blocked and mass ceased to be offered at its altars, the singing of songs was no longer heard. The whole land was plunged into darkness and people preferred the night to the day. The country was drained of its inhabitants and foreigners moved about in it.”⁷¹ The Mongols inflicted another severe blow to the Caucasian Christianity when they took the city of Ani, rich, fortified, and populated by a majority of Christians, mostly Armenians and a few small communities of Georgians. After the assailants had broken through the defensive walls “then they entered the city, took all the goods and possessions, looted all the churches, ruined and destroyed the entire city and corrupted the glory of its beauty.”⁷²

The lack of written sources about these regions during the years of the invasions does not allow us to adequately follow the development of Mongol politics related to the creed of the Caucasian people. However, the churches’ destruction generated an intense hatred towards the oppressors, indignation, and the feeling of an intimate violation against which they felt the duty to rebel. In this first phase of the events – that we could date with the first raid in 1220 – the injury suffered by the Christian communities could *created* a deep split between the population and the exogenous ruling class; thus, it is presumable, that the Mongol provisional governments had many problems to control public order in the cities and villages on the periphery. The indignation of Kiriakos when he describes the violence inflicted to the population of Ani and other cities were extreme.⁷³

There were cases in which Georgian or Armenian princes accepted submission to the Mongols and obtained in return, on the one hand, escape from the devastation and, on the other, freedom of worship. Such was the case of a nephew of Ivane and Zakariah named Jalal (later Prince of Kachezia),

71 Ibid., 202.

72 Ibid., 221.

73 Ibid., 222–24: “It was a pitiful sight there. Dead parents and their children were heaped on top of one another, like a pile of rough stones, priests and deacons and officials of the church, old, young, children, adolescents, and many virgins dealt with as it says in the holy Gospel: ‘You shall be betrayed to hunger and slavery.’ The same prescription fell upon the inhabitants of Ani, for [their corpses were] scattered here and there, fallen across the face of the plains; the land drank in the blood and fat of the wounded. Tender bodies, once washed with soap, lay blackened and swollen. Those who had not gone out of the city were led away barefoot into captivity; and those who had communed in the holy blood and body of the Son of God now ate unclean, sickening meat and drank foul mare’s milk. Modest and prudent women were deflowered by wanton, lewd men; blessed virgins who had vowed to God to keep their bodies and souls pure were fouled by various prostitutions and corrupted with indignities. This was the end of the affair”.

described as a devout Christian by Kiriakos.⁷⁴ Having accepted the bond of fidelity with Chormaghun, he was authorized to build a church in the monastery “called Gandzasar,” in whose consecration participated the “*kat’oghikos* of Aghbania/Aghuania, lord Nerses with many bishops, the great *vardapet* Vanakan with many teachers, the holy *vardapets* of Xach’en, Grigoris and lord Eghia”.⁷⁵

All in all, Chormaghun was not hostile to Christianity, and during his governorate of Caucasia, he ensured that there was no harassment of the population. Probably he was the one who called Rabban Ata in 1233 to take care of the religious affairs in the region. “When Rhaban arrived, many things became propitious for the Christians, and the killings and captivity ceased.”⁷⁶ Not only new churches were built, but some of those destroyed during the wars were restored. Christians, still according to Kiriakos, could now openly profess their faith also in Tabriz and Nchawan, that is in those regions of Iran and Azerbaijan with a Muslim majority. The burials with the cross could become visible again (there is no mention in the sources that the Mongols had banned this practice, but it had probably happened); the merchants could obtain a safe-conduct that local officials were authorized to provide so that they could circulate without being harassed. Rabban Ata wanted to see all the leaders of Christianity in the region.⁷⁷

In the early 1240s, after the Mongols had conquered much of Caucasia, Georgia, and the Armenian territories, religion for them became of course secondary. The local aristocracy, as we have seen in the previous chapter, had to provide the Mongol army with troops, means, and the nobles themselves had to participate personally in Mongol military campaigns. When Baiju replaced Chormaghun in 1242,⁷⁸ and began operations against the Rum Sultanate, the major Armenian and Georgian dignitaries took part in the expeditions against Karin, the districts of Erzindjan, Caesarea, Sebastia, Tiwrike, and others. In

74 Kirakos Gandzakets’i, 230–32.

75 Ibid., 232. Jalal finally completed the church in 1240.

76 Ibid., 238.

77 Narsetes, Catholicos of Aghbania, was recalled several times by Rabban Ata because he had not gone voluntarily to visit the Mongol official. Narsetes was also invited by the Armenian prince Awag who insisted that the prelate go to pay homage to Rabban and the wife of Chormaghun. That is what he did. He went to the Mughan plain where he paid homage to one of Chormaghun’s wives, Al’tyana (Elt’ina) Khatun, and was rewarded with the red seal (*altamgha*) a safe-conduct that made him practically untouchable within the territory conquered by the Mongols and with permission to practice his creed in his monastery in Xamshi (Kirakos Gandzakets’i, 252–54); Dashdondog 2011: 95.

78 Chormaghun was replaced by empress Töregene and Kirakos informs us that Mongol commander had gone deaf: Kirakos Gandzakets’i, 240 (see also ch. 4, note 112).

exchange for military service, the nobles obtained relative freedom of action in their districts and could now administer them only as Mongol vassals. The local aristocracy reinforced their noble status.

Therefore, in this period, Christians did not suffer retaliation because of their confession. The years in which Rabban Ata had overseen the religious affairs of the Caucasia had served to stabilize the situation, albeit with a very precarious equilibrium. In the pages dedicated to the war between the Mongols and Rum Sultanate, Kiriakos says that the troops led by Armenian and Georgian nobles and composed mostly of men taken from those areas always tried to save the Christian population of the districts they attacked. So we see that, after successfully besieging Karin, the Christian soldiers bought Gospels from the Mongols who had stolen them and then distributed them to those who had none.⁷⁹

From the first Mongol incursion into Caucasia until Hülegü's death in 1265, the general attitude towards the Christians was favorable. Baiju, proceeded with a partial restoration of the pre-conflict situation, granting lands and districts to local nobles, and religious institutions. In 1245, the Mongol general granted Khilat to T'amt'a (Armenian) and ordered the reconstruction of Karin, where he authorized the entry of a Christian bishop.⁸⁰ In these years, the Armenian *Catholicos* could circulate freely, and almost all the Armenian bishoprics were rebuilt: Karin, Ani, Kars, Bjni, Anberd, Haghbat; as well as many monasteries that had been closed for a long time because of the war. Among these were Sanahin, Getik, Haghartsin, Kerch'arhun, Hawuts', T'arh, Ayrivank'.⁸¹

In 1246 the *quriltai* elected the new Grand Khan, and the choice fell on Güyük, who was inclined to Nestorianism. The ministers he appointed, his chancellor, his tutor, were all Nestorian.⁸² As minister for religious affairs, he chose Rabban Ata. Juvaini writes that: "Since [Qadaq, the servant who raised Güyük since he was a child] was by religion a Christian, Güyük too was brought up in that faith [...]. He, therefore, went to great lengths in honouring the

79 Kirakos Gandzakets'i, 241; at the capture of Tiwrike in 1243, "[The Christian soldiers] happily took them and distributed them throughout their own districts, dividing them up among the churches and monasteries. May Christ reward the Christian princes Awag, Shahنشah, Aghbugha (Vahram's son), and Grigor Xach'enets'i (Dop'i's son) who was a pious man. For these princes and their troops bought out of captivity as many men, women, children, bishops, priests and deacons as was possible. Freeing all of them, they were allowed to go wherever they chose," (Kirakos Gandzakets'i, 242–243).

80 Kirakos Gandzakets'i, 255.

81 Ibid., 256–59.

82 Grousset, *L'empire des steppes* 336; Pelliot, "Chrétiens d'Asie Centrale," 628; Pelliot, *Les Mongols et la Papauté*, 247; Hodong, "A reappraisal," 309–38; Jackson, "The Mongols and the Faith," 245–78.

Christians and their priests, and when this was noised abroad, priests set their faces towards his Court from Damascus and Rum and Baghdad and the lands of the As [the Alans] and the Rus; and for the most part too it was Christian physicians that were attached to his service [...]. Consequently the cause of the Christians flourished, during his reign, and no Moslem dared raise his voice to them”.⁸³

In 1247 the Armenian *Catholicos* Konstantin worked for the construction of a church “in the eastern regions”; the military governor of the Kayean region, Anagurak noyon, authorized the construction of the church and, according to Kiriakos, “enlarged the roads on all sides [so that] all pilgrims come amongst his troops without fear [...]”.⁸⁴ In the districts where the Mongol tax officials worked, after Güyük had sent Arghun Aqa in Caucasia, the situation became even more tense because of the increasingly frequent recourse by the Mongols themselves to local functionaries that could move without difficulty within the Armenian-Georgian territories. Thus Bugha, one of Arghun’s officials, made extensive use of “brigands between the Iranians and the Tachiki” who “mercilessly performed deeds of cruelty and were especially inimical toward the Christians”.⁸⁵ In the period that coincided with the reorganization of the tax system, many nobles tried to bend the situation to their advantage. The Mongols could not operate a capillary control on the territory; therefore, rebellion and resistance episodes increased by the population of the villages who did not accept the harassment of the “barbarians” and the “impious”.⁸⁶

In these years, it seems that local Mongol officials tolerated religious demonstrations. When Vardapet Vanakan died in March 1249, the mourning in the Armenian community of Xoranashat was profound. The highest prelates of the area took part in the funeral: Sargis, the bishop of the diocese where the monastery of Xoranashat stood, Narses, catholicos of Aghbania, John, bishop of Garni and many others among “vardapet and priests”.⁸⁷ In other words, the Mongols did not interfere in the institutional dualism between the temporal and spiritual that characterized the organization of power in Greater Armenia and in Cilicia.

Even in the North of Caucasia, the situation for Christians was favorable at this stage. Batu was a Mongol with strong ties to traditional worship, but his son Sartaq had been raised and educated by Syrian Christian guardians,

83 Juvaini I, 259.

84 Kirakos Gandzakets'i, 259.

85 Ibid., 261. See also Dashdondog, *The Mongols and the Armenians*: 58; Lane, “Arghun Aqa,” 468–69.

86 The rebellions in the Ded and Tsiranak'ar areas were particularly relevant.

87 Kirakos Gandzakets'i, 280–85.

so he was a rather devout Nestorian. He had a favorable attitude towards Christianity, but according to Kiriakos, he also taught Muslims in the area where he ruled.⁸⁸ In 1249 Hasan, Prince of Kachetia, went to pay homage to Sartaq, who led him to Batu. The latter gave him a good reception and dismissed him with huge concessions (“the districts of Ch’araberd, Akanay, and Karkarhn, which the Turks and Georgians previously had stripped from him”).⁸⁹ On this occasion, he also obtained the exemption of Narses from taxes and the concession to the catholicos of full authority in his diocese. During the census ordered by Möngke and carried out by Arghun Aqa, the clergy were exempted from all forms of taxation.⁹⁰ Even when the Great Khan received the King of Cilicia, Hethum made him many concessions, including “a document proclaiming freedom for the [Christian] Church everywhere”.⁹¹ This order was ratified by Batu, who was still the highest Mongol authority in the West in 1255.

As we have seen before, the choices made by Ghazan at the turn of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries caused a drastic political and cultural change throughout Ilkhanate. The outcomes reverberated in Caucasia. The conversion to Islam by the new sovereign forced the latter to promote officials, mostly Muslim, and this was necessary for at least two reasons. The Mongol officials on the territory were sometimes culturally influenced by the communities to which they were attached; more often, they were traditional Mongols, which were linked to Shamanism and opposed to any form of imposed worship, especially Islam and Christianity. Ghazan had to limit their power. Secondly, the new Khan had to fix the finances that, in the decades between the conquests and its election, had plunged into a total disaster. Therefore, it was necessary to rely on learned, well-trained and knowledgeable people who knew the indigenous reality. It is no coincidence that most of the reforms of Ghazan were carried out by Rashid ad-Din.⁹²

During the Mongol domination in the Middle East and Caucasia, Islam’s religious geography underwent a series of fluctuations in the balance between confessions, but not overwhelming changes. In the first place, there was a substantial increase in Buddhism of Indian origin, and thanks also to the inclination that the Ilkhan Arghun had towards this cult. A second aspect of the question is constituted by the diffusion of Nestorianism – as it well appears from the pages of Rubruck and Plano Carpini – and above all among the

88 Ibid., 294–96.

89 Ibid., 295.

90 This order was also confirmed to the Prince of Kachetia Jalalal when he went to Batu.

91 Kirakos Gandzakets’i, 304.

92 At the beginning of the 14th century, Rashid ad-Din owned an entire district in Tabriz, which was confiscated from him when he was executed in 1318.

women of the eminent classes, pushed in this direction by choice of those belonging to the royal family: Möngke's mother, several of his wives and Hülegü's wife became Nestorian.⁹³ In the final analysis, the role of Judaism in the Ilkhanate should not be neglected; the Mongols did not particularly oppose the Jewish religion. On the contrary, it was often strengthened by the individual successes of eminent figures at court. Sa'd al-Dula, minister of Arghun, was a Jew and firm enemy of Islam; in the years he was in power, the Jews received favorable treatment. Rashid ad-Din himself was Jewish by birth. Furthermore, Judaism became soon exempted from levies as well as Christianity, Islam and Buddhism.⁹⁴

3 The Ulus Jochi and the Azov Region: A Reassessment of the Influences

One of the most important differences between the Mongol domination in Southern Caucasia and the Ulus Jochi was the latter's *failure* to undergo a real integration between dominators and dominated. Contrary to what happened in the Ilkhanate, the Mongols of the Golden Horde never merged with the local population. There was never real assimilation because of the demographic unbalance between Mongols and the local population, to the advantage of the latter, and because of the character of the *imposed relationships* between central power and pre-existing institutions. The Russian princes, as we have seen, managed to maintain a certain autonomy from the Khans. When, at the end of the thirteenth century, the ruling class of the Golden Horde finally chose Islam during the long khanate of Uzbek (r. 1313–1341), it was a purely formal fact and did not shape the politics of the State.⁹⁵ Furthermore, the presence of the Qipchaqs – the quantitative majority in the Northern Pontic steppes and pagans – did not favor a process of acculturation with the Russian peoples whose religious identity was solid.

93 Hülegü's mother, Sorqaqtani Beki (d. 1252) was a Christian; the Kereyid Toghus Khatun (d. 1265), one of his wife (and stepmother) was Christian as well.

94 Amitai, "Jews at the Mongol Court," 33–45.

95 Although the process of Islamization begun earlier on. See on this the fundamental DeWeese, *Islamization*, especially ch. 2, 67–158. The most recent research on the Islamization in the Golden Horde is Mirgaleev, "The Islamization," 89–101. The author stresses the importance of Seljuk influence on the process of Islamization in the Golden Horde since the first half of the thirteenth century and states that when Uzbek made Islam the state religion of the Ulus Jochi the Muslim functionaries "became the main pillar of the central government" and proved "prepared structurally to assume this role" (p. 91).

Russian sources have depicted Batu as an enemy of Christianity,⁹⁶ while the impression that the Western missionaries received is more nuanced.⁹⁷ The Mongol conquest in the West coincided with the attack and destruction of countries where Christianity was the state religion: Rus', Poland, Hungary, Moravia. Batu was linked to his traditions, and he was neither Christian nor Muslim. Religious relations within the vast territory of the Qipchaq could have taken a different direction if Batu had been succeeded by his son Sartaq for longer than the few months between 1255–1256. Sartaq was believed to be a Christian by the Western highest nobility as well as by the Armenian, Syriac and Muslim sources, and probably they were right but, as all the first generations' members of the Chinggisid family, he was first of all a Mongol.⁹⁸ Rubruck says that in Sartaq's court there were "many Tartars, both Christians, and Saracens on horseback"; the sovereign did not demand from the Franciscan the triple genuflection that was an obligation with the Mongols.⁹⁹ According to Kirakos,

he believed in Christ and was baptized by the Syrians who had nourished him. He granted many liberties to the Church and to Christians and with the acquiescence of his father he wrote a decree of freedom for the priests and the Church and sent it everywhere threatening death to anyone collecting taxes either from the Church or its servitors, no matter what their nationality.¹⁰⁰

The Khan did the same with the Muslims, exempting from taxation mosques.¹⁰¹ In any case, after the death of Batu the succession was problematic. Sartaq

96 "[In the year 1237] on the Voronezh river was murdered by the ruthless emperor Batu the pious prince Fedor Jur'evič of Rjazan": Saronne, *Pianto*, 69; "[In the second year of the translation of the miraculous image of Nicholas] from Cherson, the unholy emperor Batu came to Russian soil": Saronne, *Pianto*, 75. In the canticles on the destruction of Rjazan' Batu is always depicted as "the impious" or "the undignified": pp. 77, 81, 83, 85, 91, 109, 135; "Batu emperor the cursed", *Pianto*, 103, and 111: "Batu the infidel"; "God with his mighty hand had saved [the Christians] from the unfaithful Emperor Batu": Saronne, *Pianto*, 159; "the cursed Tatars wintered", Saronne, *Pianto*, 184; "Batu, like a fierce beast, did not spare his youth" [of Vsevolod, son of Yuriĭ of Rjazan], Saronne, *Pianto*, 197.

97 For obvious reasons, although even Plano Carpini, Rubruck and Benedict the Pole also perceived Batu as adverse to their faith.

98 Grousset, *L'empire des steppes*, 474; see especially the introduction by Peter Jackson to Rubruck's mission: *The Mission*, 23–24. Bundy, "The Syriac and Armenian Response," 33–54. Rubruck, *The Mission* xv, 114–18; Kirakos Gandzakets'i, 292–97.

99 Rubruck, *The Mission* xv, 116–17.

100 Kirakos Gandzakets'i, 295.

101 Jackson, "Reflections on the Islamization," 369.

died shortly after his appointment (1256) and Sartaq's son Ulaghchi succeeded him but, just like his father, he died a few months later, perhaps they were both assassinated.¹⁰² Thus, the next khan of the Ulus Jochi was Berke, Batu's brother, who ascended the throne in 1257. Berke sympathized with Islam. His reign was marked by good successes in foreign and military policy and by severe defeats. He had to defend himself against the attack of Alghan, Chagadaid Khan, who conquered Otrar.¹⁰³ He managed to repel the advance of his rival, but the loss of Otrar was a hard blow to the Golden Horde's trade with the Orient. Most of the merchants who went to China passed through this center of Transoxiana.¹⁰⁴

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Berke was soon engaged in the conflict against the Ilkhanate. In order to prevail over Hülegü, the Jochid Khan forged an alliance with the Mamluks, waving the flag of Islam against the person they claimed to be responsible for the destruction of Baghdad.¹⁰⁵ The clash between Hülegü and Berke escalated to the point that both retaliated against each other's merchants in each other's territory. Thus, Hülegü had merchants from the Northern Pontic steppes who were in Ilkhanid territory killed, and so did Berke with the Caucasian and Persian merchants.¹⁰⁶ The first phase of the clash between the two khanates reached its peak in the years 1261–1262 and lasted until 1266. Incursions, clashes at the borders by Derbend, went on for years, but none of them prevailed over the other.¹⁰⁷ The struggle had the double effect of weakening both the khanates militarily while strengthening the traditional Islamic world, with the Mamluks in the first place. From this situation, the feeble link with the territory that characterized the Mongol domination in the Pontic steppe contributed to the influence of its politics.¹⁰⁸

102 Kirakos Gandzakets'i, 301; Jackson, *The Mongols in the Islamic World*, 122–23.

103 Grousset, *L'empire des steppes* cit., 474–75; Jackson, *the Mongols in the Islamic World*, 149.

104 Grousset, *L'empire des steppes* cit., 475; Allsen, *Commodity and exchange*, 11–18.

105 See G. Lane, *Early mongol Rule*, in particular ch. 5, 96–176. The reading provided in this regard by Peter Golden, "Imperial Ideology," 71, is very interesting. According to Golden the alliance between the Golden Horde and Ilkhanate was facilitated by the common ethnic substratum of the two political realities. In fact, in Mamluk Egypt there was a large community of Qipchaqs. Favereau, "The Golden Horde and the Mamluks," 93–115; Amitai-Preiss, *Mongols and Mamluks*, 78–79. See also the recent study of R. Amitai, "Political Legitimation in the Ilkhanate," 209–48.

106 Wassaf, *Histoire* III, 381.

107 Bratianu, *Recherches sur le commerce*, 259; Amitai-Preiss, *Mongols and Mamluks*, 78–89.

108 It was the case of the first aid given to the Balkan Bulgarians against Michael VIII Palaeologus (who escaped on a Genoese ship near the mouth of the Danube). Bratianu, *Recherches sur le commerce*, 206–08. In 1281 Töde Mengü (r. 1280–1287) signed an alliance treaty with the Byzantine Empire and the Seljuks against Venice, the Ilkhanate, and the Sicilian king Charles of Anjou (r. 1266–1285). The treaty has survived in a copy by al-Qalqashandi. See Canard, "Le traité de 1281," 669–80; Thiriet, *La Romanie vénitienne*,

After Berke's regency, the conditions of the Christians in the territories of the Golden Horde decisively improved. His successor Mengü Temür (r. 1267–1280) strengthened the privileges granted to the Christians (mainly Orthodox). The Russian Church was completely exempted from taxes. In Sarai, the capital of the Horde on the Volga, there was an Orthodox Bishopric before 1280.¹⁰⁹

During the regency of Nogai – the actual “conductor” of the Horde's politics in the last decade of the thirteenth century – the privileges obtained by the Christians remained substantially intact.¹¹⁰ The tolerance shown by the Khan was probably due to the awareness of the economic importance represented by the Christian merchants. It is emblematic that, despite Islamization, the Golden Horde maintained a generally favorable attitude towards Christianity in the very years when the Genoese and Venetian trading colonies on the Black Sea were being consolidated.

Even though Mongol domination in the Ulus Jochi had been achieved with a violent conquest – and the defeat of Islamic states like the Volga Bulgars and the Khorazmian Empire – the Russian principalities had indirect relations from the new rulers. After the departure of the Mongol functionaries and tax collectors, the local aristocracy could reign autonomously. It was because the Mongols were not interested in directing the politics of an area that they considered marginal. The heart of the Horde was in the steppe, and that was the region they wanted to control.¹¹¹

If the religious aspect had important consequences on the political direction of Ilkhanate, this did not happen in the Golden Horde. In China, for example, religion was a divisive factor. The Yuan dynasty was strongly inclined towards Confucianism, to a lesser degree towards Buddhism and Taoism.¹¹² They clashed, however, with the robust cultural background of China.

In the Ulus Jochi, such a situation never occurred. Over the long term, the Qipchaqs were assimilated within the Mongol social structure, which in this

151; Balard, *La Romanie génoise*, 53–55; Bratianu, *Recherches sur le commerce*, 141–42; Grousset, *L'empire des steppes*, 477.

109 Grousset, *L'empire des steppes*, 479; Bratianu, *Recherches sur le commerce*, 259 and note 1. The Russian annals mention of the Orthodox bishop of Sarai who in 1279 would come from Byzantium for the third time to the capital on the Volga (Vernardsky “Zolotaya Orda,” 78–80).

110 Ciociltan, *The Mongols*, 103 and note 185, and 157–63 on Nogai and Toqta. *Uzelac*, “Echoes,” 509–21 and the bibliography provided by the author on Nogai.

111 Halperin, “Russia in the Mongol Empire,” 250.

112 *Ibid.*, 254; De Rachewiltz, “Personnel and Personalities,” 88–144.

case did not have to adapt to the steppes; it was quite the opposite.¹¹³ As far as the Russian principalities were concerned, their religious identity never constituted a threat to the integrity of Mongolian authority on the territory. The Russians were geographically and culturally distant from the Golden Horde, which favored their substantial religious autonomy. The other confessions present on the territory constituted an even lesser threat. The western Christians represented by the merchants had other needs, their social glue was economic, and the Khans were well aware of this. Even Islam, traditionally foreign to this region, was not so strong that it had to be controlled by the Mongol authorities.

In conclusion, we can say that during the Mongol domination in the Golden Horde, religious institutions increased in number and influence on the population. It was the result of an effective tolerance and favorable fiscal policy that occurred in this region much more than in the Ilkhanate, China, or Transoxiana, at least in the Russian area.¹¹⁴ Tolerance was the result of at least two factors: the indirect domination that the Mongols applied to the Russian principalities¹¹⁵ and the solid religious barrier constituted by Russian Christianity, a very rooted and fundamental element of their collective identity. The Mongols were influenced much more by the Turkic-Cuman element than by the Slavic Russian one.

Mongol domination had little (direct) influence on Russian culture. It did not have much influence on any of the dominated cultures. It had nothing to do with the supposed cultural inferiority of the Mongols that would have prevented them from influencing the conquered civilizations. The Mongols left a lasting political and institutional legacy in the Ilkhanate and Russia. In the Ilkhanate, the Khan promoted cultural activity thanks to a sensitivity that was primarily the result of confessional consistency. This aspect remained

113 Fedorov-Davydov, *Kočevniki Vostočniki Evropy pod vlast'ju zolotoordynskich chanov: Archeologičeskie pamiatniki*, Moskva 1966; Id., *Obščestvennyj stroj* cit.

114 Halperin, *Russia in the Mongol Empire* cit., pp. 255–256; M.D. Priselkov, *Chanskie jarliki russkim mitropolitam*, “ZIF”, Petrograd 1916. On this is very interesting the itinerary of Afanasij Nikitin, Russian merchant of Tver' who in 1466 went to India visiting Turkic, Persian, Arab populations reported in his *Chozhdenie za tri morja*, ed. E.T. Saronne, Roma 2003.

115 Historians who have discussed the Mongol domination of Russia, except for the destruction they caused, have often overlooked the comparison with other Mongol rule in Caucasia and China. I think Charles Halperin is right when he says that it would be more correct to talk not so much about Mongol influence over Russia, Iran or China as the opposite. The Golden Horde then presents this very peculiar ambivalence. The steppes, preferred by the Mongols with respect to the Russian forests, had a strong influence on the Mongols and their turkization is a rather evident fact; equally acquired is the fact that this process was slow and complex and lasted throughout the entire period in which the Mongols dominated the steppes.

marginal in Russia and in the steppes where, while never hindering Russian art and culture, the Mongols were incapable of stimulating them. The artistic flourishing that took place between the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in the north-eastern part of Russia was mainly an endogenous phenomenon, promoted and carried on by local Slavic elements. When external influences penetrated into the Ulus Jochi's territory it was mostly because of strong cultural inputs that the Mongols did not oppose. On the contrary, they were in many cases a vector of cultural transmission. At the very least, they did not pose any obstacle to cultural development, nor could they pose it.

Population and Coexistence: The Demographic Factor between Conquest and Reconstruction

1 Some Remarks on the Demographic Consequences of the Conquests

Any analysis of demographic bias regarding the Caucasian population and the Azov region is problematic. We have already treated the region's political evolution and the consequences of encountering different ethnicities. Additionally, concepts such as nomadism, sedentarism, urban culture, the constant movement of people, war, as well as reconstruction have been addressed. These events were the cause and effect of an extraordinary ethnic complexity which we have repeatedly referred to throughout the course of this book. It is now worth looking closer both at what consequences the historical process in question had on the populations of Caucasia and the Azov, and how ethnic proportions were distributed over a very vast territory. More specifically, our demographic analysis is challenged to understand how the region was both destabilized as a result of multiple invasions and how certain alliances took place between different ethnic groups as a subsequent result of invasion.

The demographic trend in thirteenth century Caucasia presents some peculiar aspects similar to the European pre-industrial era, and in particular to the early Middle Ages. High mortality rates (especially among children) were aggravated by periodic crises caused by traumatic events, including wars, famine, and the many epidemics that were a direct consequence of the latter. Furthermore, the particularly hostile environmental conditions, which were both cause and effect of the demographic decline, should not be underestimated. Conflicts provoked the abandonment of land, especially in areas with a strong agricultural vocation, and the consequence was its impoverishment. In the Ulus Jochi, where breeding livestock was a fundamental productive factor, the conditions of the agricultural landscape were partly different. Nomadism tempered the population, increasing their resistance to environmental difficulties.

In Caucasia, the intense succession of nomadic incursions began as early as the late eleventh century and was the basis of a slow process of demographic recovery in the face of a rapid decrease in human resources. If the demographic downturn of the Golden Horde mainly occurred following the second

Mongol incursion (1236–1240), in Caucasia, the decline was already in a phase of completion from the mid-twelfth century.

The relationship between the urban population and rural areas was different between the northern and the southern sector of Caucasia. In the northern steppes, urban poles of attraction were scarce and mainly concentrated on the main waterways. In Kievan Rus', the cities were numerous, but even in this region there was a dense network of cities. In turn, Caucasia and Khorazm represented realities with different characteristics. Mongol invasions were terrible for cities; particularly in Khorazm, centers such as Urgench, Samarkand, and Bukhara, underwent massive destruction and several massacres. The frequent redefinition of borders that occurred during this period was also crucial for Caucasia. The destabilization suffered by the centers of power as a result of the nomadic incursions (above all in Georgia and the Muslim Caliphates) was accompanied by a deficiency of hegemonic centers that could assert their supremacy over the rural areas. In the long term this would have led to greater political stability and security. The new conquerors completed this scenario in all the subjugated areas after a few decades in power.

This context allowed for greater mobility of men and goods and facilitated the establishment of a politically unified empire. The strong attraction represented by the diminished uncertainty of land transit routes and the consequent increase in trade stimulated a migratory inflow whose most evident effect was the settlement, and sometimes the construction *ex novo*, of very active and early organized foreign communities (the Genoese, Venetian and Catalan settlements are examples of such communities). The sea was fundamental for the economic recovery of Caucasia; the promotion of trade supported by Mongolian representatives *in loco* proved decisive. The Ulus Jochi managed to trade thanks to the Caspian Sea, which flows into the region's most traditionally developed artery of communication: the Volga and the Black Sea (Don and Dnepr).

There are no specific written sources through which we can clarify and frame the demographic picture of Caucasia entirely in the aftermath of the Mongol invasion. To do so, we will have to resort to indirect clues. From this point of view, narrative production is more accessible because it allows us to obtain a general picture of a larger territory. In contrast, the documentary sources presents us with the a more peculiar (often territorial) reality, like the case of the Italian notaries in the Golden Horde and the Ilkhanate. Therefore, it is necessary to make a geographical distinction, starting from the north towards Southern Caucasia, specifically at the mouth of the Don. The period considered is more extended than the limits imposed on our research to appreciate complex phenomena better and poorly supported by the documentation.

2 The Golden Horde and the Azov Region

The first Mongol raid in Caucasia occurred while the states in this area were going through a phase of decline. The low resistance to the advance of the Chinggisid army was also the result of this weakness. That said, I think it is misleading to deny or try to scale down the event and the disastrous consequences it produced at the demographic level. Kievan Rus' – although for centuries in contact with the world of the steppes – had never experienced anything of the magnitude of the Mongol invasion. In Caucasia, however, the situation was, as we shall see, somewhat different. Twentieth century Russian historiography has insisted that political chaos was rampant throughout the state at the end of the twelfth century. They have identified this power unraveling and internal litigiousness as the leading cause of the weak resistance against the Mongol advance.¹

Such political disarticulation was a fact, but it should be reassessed and placed in a more comparative dimension. All the Russian principalities of the time, when attacked, proved insufficient against the Mongols. No one, during the campaigns of 1236–40, could prevent their advance and effectively oppose it. At the end of the twelfth century, a process of general economic recovery was underway, especially in the northern and south-western areas of Rus', driven by the commercial successes of cities like Novgorod' and centers on the trade routes connected with Central Asia. A large part of the Crimea was indeed occupied by the Qipchaqs. The Hungarian Kingdom, Poland, the Livonians, Lithuania, and the Teutonic order were all threats against the Rus'. In extreme synthesis, we can affirm that on the eve of the Mongol invasion, Kievan Rus' was sharply undermined from a political and military point of view, but this was not a new situation. Russian princes had never been very united, and the Rus' political organization is even today a subject of debate. All in all the Russians' resistance to the new invaders did not differ very much from that of Poland and Hungary, which occurred a few months later.

The dyscrasia between economic growth that began at the end of the twelfth century combined with political weakness in Rus' on the eve of the invasion, was interrupted by the massacres perpetrated against villages in rural areas.

1 Even if at the end of the century, positions started to articulate and the Mongol domination in Russia underwent a thorough scientific reassessment. For a traditional view see Grekov and Jakubovskij, *L'Orda d'Oro*, in particular ch. 1 of the second part, pp. 145–163; Kargalov, *Vneshnepoliticheskie factory*, 219–255; Borisov, "Otechestvennaya istoriografiya," 129–146. For a brilliant analysis of the problem see Halperin, *Russia and the Golden Horde*, cit. introduction. For a general overview in Russian see Sverdlov, *Domongol'skaja Rus'*, especially ch. 1. For the historiographical debate both historically and today see Pubblici, "Rus'/Russia," 310ff.

The besieged population experienced substantial hardship at all levels. In the cities of Khorazm, it was no different. The production, trade, and human potential of the region suffered a severe blow.² Much of the artisanal activities underwent drastic reduction due not only to the destruction generated by wars but also to the systematic deportations that the Mongols carried out to secure the services of skilled workers in their cities in the East.³ The circulation of productive forces was a phenomenon that took on considerable dimensions in the first years of Mongol rule. It was not an absolute novelty for Eurasia because it represented, in part, the continuation of modest mobility already active for centuries between the Near East and East Asia; these relations were mainly commercial and had as their object, not only small factories (primarily silk) but also workshops that produced both bronze and glass.⁴

There was no less damage caused in the countryside. Most of the Russian villages were in the northern forests, where the Mongolian cavalry did not penetrate, but the raids of Batu's forces severely damaged the border areas with the steppes. Agricultural production suffered a severe downfall, and in some cases, it is difficult to blame Russian scholars when they claimed that the Mongol invasion had not merely damaged the productive economy of the region but had led it to a regressive process that lasted well beyond the collapse of the Golden Horde.⁵ This consideration cannot, however, take on a general character. The effects of the conquests were varied for the different areas in which they occurred. If it is true that the southern cities of Rus' were the most affected, this is not as true for the Northern cities. We must also bear in mind the complex game of alliances between Mongols and Russian princes during the years of domination.

The Mongols exploited the territory of the Ulus Jochi in a conscious way and according to its real potential. The areas with strong commercial vocation were supported by an organized policy and international agreements in a context of general openness towards the outside world.

The areas where agricultural production was dominant, such as Bolgar and parts of Crimea, were left to this productive model, which also included a massive recourse to artisanal labor (processing of leather, furs, but also developed wheat cultivation).⁶ This attitude only bore lasting fruit from the beginning

2 On Rus' see Kargalov, *Vneshnepoliticheskie faktory*, 173–217; Halperin, *Russia and the Golden Horde*, 75–76.

3 Allsen, *Exchange and commodity*, 30–45; Allsen, "The circulation," 263–64.

4 Li Chih-Chang, *Travels of an Alchemist*, 93 and 124; Allsen, *Commodity and exchange*, 35.

5 For a complete bibliographical picture see Halperin, "Soviet Historiography," 306–22; Pubblici, "Rus'/Russia," 305–15.

6 Martin, *Treasure*, 61–85.

of the fourteenth century. The 14th century was not a favorable period for the Golden Horde: a severe drought followed by a violent epidemic that affected horses and sheep, depopulated the districts, and had massive effects in the cities. The Egyptian historian al-Makrizi (1364–1442) writes that this epidemic was “so serious that they [the country people] had nothing to eat, and sold their children and relatives to merchants, who took them to Egypt and other places”.⁷ The recuperation began at the end of the first decade of the century. During these years, there was an evident growth in productive forces and the recovery of some major urban centers. The pressure exerted by the central power of the Golden Horde on Russian princes was also gradually diminishing. Until circa the first half of the fourteenth century, the Ulus Jochi found a loyal ally in Moscow; a consequence of these agreements were frequent punitive incursions against the enemy cities of the future Russian capital. When these agreements changed, however, it was Moscow that suffered repeated attacks by the Mongols.

From a demographic point of view, this condition had contradictory effects. We can observe two different phenomena. The damage produced to the countryside in the area between the Dnepr and Volga – especially in the first two decades of domination – brought the rural villages’ ability to supply themselves to their knees. All this took place immediately after the war; the result was a forced migration of large sections of the population northwards towards the areas of Beloozero and Viatka, but also the Don basin and Jaroslavl’. The latter were affected to a lesser extent than the former (even Moscow and Tver’ emerged without substantial damage from the effects of the wars).⁸ The other aspect of the issue is the economic outcomes that Mongolian politics had in the same geographical context. The pro-trade conduct and encouragement that the Mongols gave towards trade attracted merchants from abroad. Settlement in centers that had until recently been inaccessible revitalized the steppes’ economy where Mongol rulers were enthusiastic about the commercial practice. Without denying in any way the catastrophic effect that the Mongolian invasion had on Russia, we must ask ourselves, however, how long these conditions lasted. The impact of the demographic structure and economic organization of the region was absorbed in the following decades when,

7 Grekov and Jakubovskij, *L’Orda d’Oro*, 124–125. This situation is confirmed by the Venetian notarial deeds of the 14th century drawn up in Tana and for which see Karpov, *On the Origin*, 225–35; Pubblici, “Venezia e il mar d’Azov,” 485–500; Pubblici, “Antagonism and Coexistence,” 25–47; Pubblici, “Western immigration,” 90–107.

8 Moscow in particular benefited from the massive influx of people. The prince of the city was clever to take advantage of a complex political situation, complying with Mongol demands when he could not oppose their will and then rebel against them when this was possible.

although it did not reach the previous demic levels, there was a progressive growth that slowed down with the crisis of the mid-fourteenth century. This was the destiny common to all the known world, until further suffering was inflicted following the Timurid invasion of the 1390s.

3 Subcaucasia

In a passage of his *Tarikh-i*, Juvaini writes that “in Khorasan and Iraq, which countries are afflicted with a hectic fever and a chronic ague: every town and village has been several times subjected to pillage and massacre and has suffered this confusion for years, so that that [...] the population will not attain the tenth part of what it was before”.⁹ With these words, Juvaini, in the 1260s, describes the desolation that followed the Mongol conquest of what would become the Ilkhanate. Unlike the Ulus Jochi, it coincided politically with the institutional organization it replaced, where the Russian princes remained in their place between the Mongol government and the local population. The policy of reconstruction and trade stimulation was like the one adopted in Ulus Jochi, but here the Mongols had to face a structural economy firmly organized on trade, stable markets, and international trade. A well consolidated commercial network from India to Mediterranean Africa of which this region was the junction.

At the turn of the twelfth century, the population of Caucasia, driven by the successes of the Kingdom of Georgia, was considerable in quantity and density, especially in the lowlands. The first years of Mongol domination were marked by a deep economic and demographic crisis as a direct consequence of the conquest.¹⁰ The long duration of wars and the extension of the military theatre where they occurred, effectively turned this phase into one of a steady and long decline (until circa the 1290s). The institutional change that occurred with the advent of the Ilkhans (1256) had no immediate effect. In fact, during these decades, the population decreased considerably, the conditions of the countryside worsened significantly, and agricultural production diminished in favor of open pastoral nomadism that the Turco-Mongol tribes joining the armies (and that were an integral part of those armies) appreciated the most.

9 Juvaini I, 96–97.

10 The sources describe much of the hardships suffered by the Caucasian cities. For example, during the capture of Erzurum by the Mongols in 1242, a large part of the population was killed and many of the survivors enslaved or deported. See on this Bar Hebraeus, *The Cronography*, 406; Kirakos Gandzakets'i, 279–80; Grigor Arknerts'i, 7–8; Blake-Frye, “History of the Nation of Archers,” 313; Bedrosian, *The Turco Mongol*, 113–14.

This “colossal” decline also affected the cities,¹¹ where the demographic collapse, especially among the male population and the increasing difficulties of supply, made life very hard. To this must be added the oppressive taxation imposed by the Mongols in the first decades of the domination, whose effects fell primarily on rural areas, which were plundered of their few remaining resources.

The fiscal organization promoted by Möngke throughout the empire and implemented by Amir Arghun Aqa in Caucasia in 1254, left no direct trace in terms of written documentation. Some estimates indicate the Armenian population of Caucasia (excluding Cilicia) of around 4 million in those years.¹² We do not have precise data on this, but if we consider what the Caucasus and all the surrounding regions represented in the Middle Ages, then we can admit that the main urban centers and the rural villages had a high number of inhabitants. Cities like Barda, Baylakan, Derbend, Shamakhi, Ganja, and Dabil were essential markets for all of Islam. Today we can estimate the population of Georgia to be at about 4.5 million.¹³

Before further change occurred with the birth of the Ilkhanate, Caucasia was an autonomous administrative unit under the direct authority of the noyon that had conducted military operations in the region (Chormaghun and Baiju). It was composed of 5 districts (vilayet). Of these five, two were composed of a majority Armenian population; the others were populated by Georgians, Azerbaijani, and different ethnic groups, mainly Christians. In the vilayet of Georgia or Guristan, the Armenian element predominated. Each vilayet was to provide a certain number of tümen. For example, the vilayet of Greater Armenia consisted of eight tümen; therefore, it was able to provide at least eighty thousand men for the army when necessary.

The establishment of the Ilkhanate forced the local aristocracy to serve in the Mongolian army, which produced further depopulation of the Caucasian district. The male population was recruited for Mongolian military campaigns,

11 Petruševskij, “The socio-economic condition,” 483. For a recent and balanced position see May, *The Mongol Conquests*, 211–31.

12 Bedrosian, *The Turco-mongol*, 120–21; Dedeyan, *Storia degli Armeni*, 242, whose calculations coincide with those provided by Bedrosian.

13 Allen, *A History of Georgian People*, 285. Elsewhere numbers have been perhaps exaggerated by estimating the population of the Caucasus to be around 16 million people. Unfortunately, the sources available for this type of research do not allow certain acquisitions. It is therefore appropriate to use the figures only as an indication of a situation which, despite the great difficulties faced by the inhabitants of Caucasia, did not appear to be disastrous from a demographic point of view in the middle of the 13th century.

which were frequent both against Mamluk Egypt and the Golden Horde on the Caucasian border.

A slow, albeit evident, improvement in the region's general conditions was already visible in the early fourteenth century when Ghazan's reforms had a positive effect, especially in the countryside and with agricultural production. A further phase of this process can be traced from the death of Ilkhan Abu Said (1335) to the disaster caused by the Timurid conquest. The disintegration of the Ilkhanate generated a deep political crisis, and power struggle. Local authorities who, until a short time before were representatives of the central power in the various areas of the Ilkhanate, waged war to support one pretender to the throne rather than another, and this continued at least until the violent death of the last ilkhan: Togha-Timur in 1353.

Thanks to Rashid ad-Din, who was Vizier of Ghazan Ilkhan and actuator of the reforms implemented by the latter, we can understand what changes occurred between the tenth century and the end of the fifteenth century in the districts of the Ilkhanate. In the Hamadan region at the beginning of the thirteenth century, there were about 660 villages. In 1340 they were 220. In Herat, there were 400 villages in the tenth century, while at the beginning of the fifteenth century, there were only 167.¹⁴ One of the characteristic elements of the Mongolian reorganization in Caucasia was the impossibility of the new conquerors to establish a lasting peace-time regime. The wars against the Ulus Jochi and the political problems with Mamluk Egypt made it challenging to start an economic recovery based on solid foundations.

TABLE 2 Number of villages before and after the Mongol conquest in the Ilkhanate

District (<i>vilayet</i>)	Early 13th century	Around 1340	Early 15th century
Hamadan	660 villages	212	–
Rudhravar	93	73	–
Khwaf	200	–	30
Isfara'in	451	50	26
Baihaq	321	40	84
Juvain	189	–	29
Turshiz	226	–	20

14 Petruševskij, "The socio-economic condition," 496–97.

From the table, we can deduce that over more than one century, the Hamadan region suffered a decrease in villages equal to 67.88%. In Rudhravar, the hemorrhage was less serious, but it was still 21.51%. In the areas of Isfara'in and Baihaq, depopulation was particularly dramatic: 88.92% and 87.54%, respectively. The data reported in the third column helps us to evaluate what other traumatic events occurred during the fourteenth century: the plague epidemic of 1348 and the catastrophic invasion of Tamerlane at the end of the century. In the early fifteenth century, we can see how in the district of Isfara'in, the population was 5.76% of what it was during the early years of the thirteenth century, with a further decrease, compared to sixty years before, of almost 6%. Significant recovery occurs in the area of Baihaq, where growth is over 50% more than in 1340 with a percentage that does not exceed 26.16% of the number of villages that existed at the beginning of the thirteenth century.

The tax levy is another index through which it is possible to evaluate the period's demographic movements. Reliable data was provided by Hamdullah Mustaufi Qazvini (b. 1281–1282)¹⁵ – an official of the financial department of the Ilkhanate.

If we consider that the taxation imposed on the conquered lands was quite heavy, especially in the first period of domination, then the above figures are not insignificant compared to the contributive capacity that the Caucasian regions provided until the first decades of the thirteenth century. Azerbaijan was subject to the most onerous tax regime due to the absence of intermediaries between the Ilkhans and the population on the one hand and the wealth of its territory on the other. The region paid 10.8% a hundred years earlier in

TABLE 3 Total of fiscal imposition before and after the Ilkhanate (in *dinar*)

Regions	Taxation (early 13th century)	Taxation during the Ilkhanate	Taxation after 1335
Azerbaijan	20,000,000	2,160,000	–
Mughan and Arran	3,000,000	303,000	–
Shirvan	1,000,000	113,000	820,000
Gushtasfi	1,000,000	118,500	–
Guristan and Abkhazia	1,000,000	1,202,000	400,000
Greater Armenia	2,000,000	390,000	–

15 Ibid., 497; Mustawfi Hamd-Allah. *The Geographical Part*.

the fourteenth century. Armenia paid 19.5%, while Georgia around 20% more, and it was the outcome of both the political situation with Armenia as an ally of the Ilkhanate and the objective difficulty it had in recovering its population losses provoked by the invasions of the thirteenth century and aggravated by the crisis of the mid-fourteenth century. Georgia, for its part, constituted a vassal state, subjected indirectly to the authority of the Ilkhans and, for this reason it was actively controlled by the fiscal flow. It is difficult to think that it had suffered less damage than other states in the same region.

The urban network spread between Caucasia and Transoxiana was traditionally well developed; the cities were more or less extensive and had an organized relationship with the rural areas. The Mongol invasion had devastating effects on the larger cities (Merv, Herat, Nishapur, Tbilisi, Kars, and Ani), and some of them never reached their potential capacity before they were conquered. Other cities witnessed a true rebirth during the Mongol period. This was the case of Tabriz and all the cities directly involved in the complex exchanges that progressed rapidly from the second half of the thirteenth century. Tabriz grew considerably: from 6,000 passes in circumference in the mid-thirteenth century, the city grew to be over 25,000 with Ghazan khan (1295–1304); the same was true for the two Sarai, but also for Urgench and Samarkand. They regained vigor and returned to being centers for trade of vital importance. Some cities based their economic prosperity on trade established contacts with other centers of Western and Central Europe and expanded their network of international interests eastwards.

The European urban mercantile class met the Mongolian controlled nomadic society of Central and Eastern Asia in Caucasia more or less directly in areas the strategic and economic importance of which was paramount.

Conclusions: Results and Perspectives

The Caucasus is the closest orographic geological complex to a sea on the entire planet, and because of this it became a natural frontier between opposing and fragmented forces. One cannot but agree that “the cultural fragmentation and political imbalance of the Caucasus are derived from the historical interdependence of the region with the steppe world, grafted onto an interactive mechanism that has determined a mutual influence”.¹ For centuries the Caucasus has represented a point of contact between diverse and often opposing cultures that never thoroughly conquered it, giving ethnicity a generalizing and collective value that other areas of the world also experienced (Christian Europe, for example). The drive for political and ideological unification was never completely achieved and resulted from the fact that every conquest was imperfect or “interrupted”. Nomadism had to come to terms with the sedentary model, and the latter never managed to establish itself as prominent over the whole of Caucasia. The Mongol conquest and domination are an ethnic, cultural, economic, and political laboratory of extraordinary complexity. However, it was also a moment when the written sources allow us to glimpse aspects that are less easily traceable from the previous period. The impact of the Mongol conquest in Caucasia has aroused the keen interest of specialists, particularly the destructive role that this event had on the region and on the “epochal” character of its consequences.

The Mongol invasions were a form of migration, but only a fraction of that composite nomadic society moved westwards and settled. The Mongol army was indeed the direct expression of that same society that carried out the military campaigns. The ruling class that became established in the conquered areas was relatively small in number and reluctant to settle permanently in an environmental context that it did not recognize as its own. The case of Rus', and the creation of the Golden Horde, is an evident example of this. There was neither a substitution of people nor an ethnic revolution; the local element predominated during and even after the invasion, and this took place, albeit in different terms, in all the areas conquered from Persia to China, from Russia to Central Asia. Suffice it to say that the Ilkhanate disintegrated where assimilation and cooperation between the Mongol ruling class and the local elites occurred more frequently than in other areas of the Empire.

The Mongol conquests of the thirteenth century had an extraordinary historical significance because, for at least fifty years, the creation of coherent

¹ Tosi, “Dalla tribù all'impero,” 250.

political organisms resulted in new transit routes, and because roads became safer, and international trade regained vigor in areas hitherto almost unknown.² Furthermore, the unification of a territory which, at the moment of its maximum development, covered two-thirds of Asia and one-third of Europe, was above all a cultural revolution. Before the Mongol conquest, the East was, for a Western European – whether a commoner or a well-learned person – a purely mental image, an abstract cultural category, in a vertical (perhaps even eschatological) projection. The thirteenth century marked a change that is well represented by the Polo brothers, the Vivaldis and many other travelers who ventured into enterprises that for the time appeared to be impossible.

The best prepared Italian cities moved the arrival point for their investments in the Levant from Constantinople and threw themselves into a new adventure that took them to China, though rarely directly and continuously. Indeed, in order for the great “colonial” season of Genoa and Venice to take place, it was necessary to have the audacity, mental preparation and the infrastructure of a Western European mercantile class that was willing to embark on a galley and make a three-month journey to the mouth of the Don in Crimea and then proceed, on horseback, to Central Asia and China. However, the concomitance of these factors generated new opportunities and opened up a new world, laying the foundation for the great discoveries of the modern age. Most of all the Mongol conquests brought the single areas of the Eurasian continent closer; the political unification, albeit ephemeral, integrated regional economic systems into a commonly shared and frequented space, from Europe to Asia. This was true for the economy, for trade, and as a consequence for knowledge.

Caucasia is in between. It was not the *middle empire* (*impero di mezzo*) described by the contemporaries, but it was the hinge, the junction point between Asia and Europe. The Mongol domination of Caucasia was unique when compared to previous nomadic incursions into the region. The Mongols were the first to control both the Eurasian steppes and the sedentary, organized – therefore culturally distant – peoples. The increased mobility of merchants involved not only Europe but also a large part of Asia: Muslim merchants traveled to the North and East (and included the markets of Transoxiana, the Golden Horde, and China) as well as western merchants to the East. Traders increased travel distances because they could reach distant countries; the safety of the roads increased. It is equally valid to state, however, that productive capacities changed forcibly – not always and not everywhere in the same way – because a large part of the skilled workforce was driven out

2 Benjamin Kedar called those regions as “external”, opposed to the well-known and for long frequented “internal” ones (*Merchant in crisis* cit., ch. 2).

of their countries of origin and ended up in shops directly controlled by the central ruling class of the new Empire. This phenomenon had a not inconsiderable cultural consequence.

The *Pax Mongolica* was an objective condition that led to the meeting of two worlds far apart from each other. Merchandise moved more than men, and it was not a permanent and equal condition in all its local manifestations. Nor was it with the Mongol conquest that people began to travel long distances; they did so even before that. The movement of goods and people from East to West and vice versa had been active since the first centuries of the Christian era but was limited to Asia and Transoxiana. For example, in the Far East, goods (mainly fabrics) traveled from China to Central Asia well before the advent of the Mongol Yuan dynasty. However, it is only with the Yuan that organized production centers were established and subjected to stricter rules where magistrates were put in charge of the textile and gold industries. Systematic importation of skilled labor arrived with a continuous flow both during the conquests and (at least) in the following three decades. The Mongol ruling class improved the organization of production, and the extension of the Empire broadened the size of the international market to place the products.

The process of re-identification, which saw the Mongols settling down, was slow and rarely actually took place, but it was counterbalanced by the planning of how the resources that the Mongols were aware they needed could be better exploited. They acquired the necessary economic resources and cultural elements from the sedentary world whenever they considered them beneficial.³ Their view of the sedentary world was of a world alien to them, but to be used to their advantage, was the result of a pre-existing tension in relation to those structures that were entirely intrinsic to their culture (or those aspects of their cultural background that were an integral part of traditional Mongolian society) and those that were extrinsic.

The other aspect that was new and directly determined by the conquests was the extension of the Empire, which, although soon shattered into four separate Khanates, created a kind of continuity in generally hostile regions. Ideological barriers fell, and if they resisted effortlessly at the local level, they still guaranteed the movement and more or less stable settlement of people in places where they would not otherwise have ventured. We have no news of travel to China by western merchants or travelers before the Mongol conquests. The Don and the Volga regions might have been unreachable in the twelfth century. On the other hand, areas such as the Kerch Strait suffered a sudden collapse following the conquest of Constantinople by the Crusaders;

3 Allsen, *Commodity and exchange*, 101.

in this case, it was Trebizond that benefited. The Mongol conquest, favoring economic immigration from Western Europe, gave a new stimulus to the area, which acquired new importance both for the richness of its granaries and the excellent fishing in its sea.

Steppe nomadism actively contributed to the West's cultural development, opening the doors of a hitherto unknown world. Traveling long and new distances was not only about goods or people but also about knowledge.⁴ The fall of mental frontiers and the renewal – slow and discontinuous – of some consolidated cultural categories were among the most evident elements of that heritage. From this point of view, and with due caution, the Chinggisid conquests represented a considerable change that made the idea of an Open Orient described by the protagonists of this new season seem real and concrete. Western emigration, for its part, was affected immediately by such stimuli. A merchant is a man of peace: he is that factor of contact between two distant worlds and allows the learning and knowledge of the other through a practice that is not military; he guarantees a complete and peaceful relationship with the outside world and in virtue of these characteristics the Mongols supported his activity. The Mongols could not manage an empire like the one they had built in the second half of the thirteenth century. This inability was a consequence of many factors; the size of their achievements would have been excessive for any organized structure (in fact, the Mongol experience would have no equal in human history), but more than any other reason we should note their peculiar incapacity to administer such a heterogeneous universe. This difficulty was a legacy of their original environmental adaptation, so much so that the recourse to the work of foreigners was massive and socially transversal. The cases of China and the Ilkhanate are emblematic because not only were artisans called upon to work for the Yuans but also administrators, military functionaries, and laborers of all kinds.

The demographic effects of the conquests have long been discussed; we have tried to account for them, but many questions remain open about the extent of the refugees who moved from the conquered cities to other centers more or less distant from the Mongolian army's route. These mass migrations were frequent in Central Asia, where many cities were destroyed, and the countryside devastated. The same is true for the Ilkhanate, where depopulation, mainly rural, was remarkable.

The relationship between man and the environment, studied in depth and with good results in Italy during the 1980s, is an aspect that hasn't received decisive research in regard to the nomadic context. It would be necessary to

4 Allsen, "Mongols as Vectors for Cultural Transmission," 135–54.

compare the use of environmental resources by nomadic communities with the relationship that the sedentary societies had to them from the twelfth century onwards (Cumans and Mongols above all). It would be necessary to study the organization of the spaces in the Mongol Empire, in particular the organization of agrarian, and more generally, rural space and its relationship with human settlements. However, it would be necessary to study the organization of the spaces in the Mongolian Empire, particularly the management of the agrarian spaces and their relationship with human settlements.

It is worth thinking about the perception of Mongol conquests in Communal Italy, and what echoes reached this side of the Mediterranean. It is worth looking into the consequences they had on European politics. It would be necessary to study in a free light the new acquisitions we have mentioned, as well as the pontifical documentation of the decades in which the alliance between the West and Mongols took place.

Nevertheless, there is an imperative need to prioritize the historical problems that concern the Mongol “experience” and its impact not only on Caucasia but also on Eurasia as a whole. In the last few decades, specialists have worked hard, studies on the Mongol Empire have multiplied and their excellence has allowed an extraordinary increase of our understanding. There is now a growing awareness that only by working as a team, by coming together, can Mongol studies and all related fields progress. All-round, even today, I must still conclude that the ideas that arose during the preparation of this work outweigh the certainties; the doubts are by far greater than the convictions. However, the study and desire to understand complex historical phenomena requires us to keep on looking far. I have chosen to look to the east, because looking to the east we see the sun rise. Every day.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

- Abou'l Fedâ. *Résumé de l'Histoire des Croisades tiré des Annales d'Abou'l-Fedâ*, translated by William MacGuckin de Slane. In *Recueil des Historiens des Croisades, Historiens Orientaux*. Tom. 1, 1–186. Paris, 1872.
- Adontz, Nicolas. “Notes Arméno-Byzantines.” *Byzantion* 9 (1934): 367–82.
- Agadžanov, Sergej Grigor'evič, and A.A. Rosljakov. *Očerki istorii oguzov i turkmen Srednej Azii IX–XIII vv. Pod red.* 1969.
- Bar Hebraeus, *The Chronography of Abu'l Faraj (Bar Hebraeus)*. Ed. and trans. by Ernst A. Wallis Budge. Oxford: Oxford University Press 1932 (repr. Piscataway (NJ): Gorgias Press, 2003).
- Becquet, Jean, and Louis Hambis. *Histoire des Mongols, traduit et annoté par Dom Jean Becquet et par Louis Hambis*. Paris: Maisonneuve, 1965.
- Blake, Robert Pierpont, Richard Nelson Frye, and Francis Woodman Cleaves, “History of the Nation of Archers.” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 3–4 (1949): 400–444.
- Blake, Robert Pierpont, Richard Nelson Frye, and Francis Woodman Cleaves. “History of the Nation of the Archers (The Mongols) by Grigor of Akanc' hitherto ascribed to Marak'ia the monk”. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1954.
- Borbone, Piergiorgio. *Storia di Mar Yahballaha e di Rabban Sauma*. Torino: Zamorani, 2000.
- Boyle, John A. *Rashid ad-Din. The Successors of Genghis Khan*, ed. John A. Boyle. New York: Columbia University Press, 1971.
- Boyle, John Andrew. “Het'um. The Journey of Het'um I, King of Little Armenia to the Court of the Great Khan Möngke.” *Central Asiatic Journal* 9, (1964): 175–89.
- Brosset, Marie Félicité. *Histoire de la Géorgie depuis l'antiquité jusqu'au XIX^e siècle, traduite di Géorgien par Kharthlis chowreba*: I. L'Acad. Imper. des Sciences, 1849.
- Browne, Edward G. *A History of Persian Literature Under Tartar Dominion (AD 1265–1505)*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1920.
- Browne, Edward G. *A Literary History of Persia. 1: From the Earliest Times until Firdawsi*. London: Routledge, 2012.
- Browne, Edward G. *A Literary History of Persia. 2: From Firdawsi to Sa'di*. Richmond, Surrey: Curzon, 1999.
- Bundy, David D. “Het'um's «*La Flor des Estoires de la Terre d'Orient*»: A Study in Medieval Armenian Historiography and Propaganda,” *Revue des Études Arméniennes* 20, (1986–87): 223–35.
- Burger, Glenn. *A Lytell Cronycle*. Trans. Richard Pynson. Toronto, 1988.
- Canard, M. “Le traité de 1281 entre Michel Paléologue et le sultan Qalâ'un.” *Byzantion* x (1935): 669–80.

- Carile, Antonio. "Partitio Terrarum Imperii Romanie." *Studi Veneziani*, 7 (1965): 125–305.
- Carmen Miserabile. *Anonymus and Master Roger: Anonymi Bele Regis Notarii Gesta Hungarorum*, a cura di Rady, Martyn C., Lázló Veszpremi, e János M. Bak, Budapest: Central European University, 2010.
- Cinnamo, Giovanni. *Epitome rerum ab Ioanne et Manuele Comnenis gestarum*, Tesi di Laurea di Angela Tomei discussa nell'A.A. 2000/2001 nella Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia dell'Università di Firenze.
- Comnene, Anne, and Bernard Leib. *Alexiade regne de l'empereur alexis I comnene*, 1081–1118. Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1945.
- Coniate, Niceta. *Grandezza e catastrofe di Bisanzio*. Vol. I (Libri 1–8), a cura di Pontani, Anna, Aleksandr P. Kazhdan, e Riccardo Maisano, Milano: Mondadori, 2017.
- Coniate, Niceta. *Grandezza e catastrofe di Bisanzio*. Vol. II (Libri 9–14), a cura di Meschini Pontani, Anna, Jean Louis van Dieten, Milano: Mondadori, 1999.
- Coniate, Niceta. *Grandezza e catastrofe di Bisanzio*. Vol. III (Libri 15–19-De Statuis), a cura di Pontani, Anna, Jean Louis Van Dieten, Filippomaria Pontani, Milano: Mondadori, 2014.
- Cross, Samuel H., and Olgerd P. Sherbowitz-Wetzor. *Russian primary chronicle: Lausertian texts*. Cambridge: Medieval Academy of America, 1968.
- D'Avezac, Marie Armand. *Relation des Mongols ou Tartares par le frère Jean du Plan de Carpine de l'Ordre de Frères Mineurs*. Paris: Arthus-Bertrand, 1838.
- De adventu Tartarorum*. Matteo Paris. *Cronica Majora IV*. Ed. Henry Richard Luard, 112–19. London, 1877. Repr. Cambridge University Press, 2012.
- De Lastivert, Aristakés, Haïg Berbérian, and Marius Canard. *Récit des malheurs de la nation arménienne*. Ed. de Byzantion, 1973.
- De Rachewiltz, Igor. *The Secret History of the Mongols. A Mongolian Epic Chronicle of the Thirteenth Century*. Trans. and ed. by Igor De Rachewiltz, Shorter Version. Washington: Western University-CEDAR, 2015.
- Defremery, Charles, and Beniamino Raffaello Sanguinetti. *The Travels of Ibn Battuta, AD 1325–1354*. 2 vols. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.
- Defremery, Charles, and Beniamino Raffaello Sanguinetti. *Voyages d'Ibn Batoutah. AD 1325–1354*. 4 vols. Paris, 1877.
- Della Rocca, Raimondo Morozzo, and Antonino Lombardo. *Documenti del commercio veneziano nei secoli XI–XIII: nei secoli XI–XIII*. Libreria italiana, 1940.
- Dölger, Franz. *Regesten der Kaiserurkunden des ostroemischen Reiches von 565–1453: T. Regesten von 565–1282.-4. T. Regesten von 1282–1341.-5. T.(Schluss) Regesten von 1341–1453*. Vol. 1. 1924.
- Encyclica contra Tartaros*. Monumenta Germaniae Historica. *Constitutiones et Acta Publica Imperatorum et Regnum*, 11, Hannover, 1896, 322–25.

- Epistola Brunonis ad Henricum regem*. Monumenta Poloniae Historica. 4.3, series nova 11: Lwów 1864.
- Golubovich, Girolamo. *Biblioteca bio-bibliografica della Terra Santa e dell'Oriente francescano*. 5 vols. Quaracchi, Firenze: Collegio San Bonaventura, 1906–27.
- Grigor of Akner, *History of the Nation of Archers*. Ed. Robert Bedrosian. Long Branch (NJ), 2003. Accessed April 16, 2021. <http://www.attalus.org/armenian/gatoc.html>.
- Grigoriu Bar Hebraeus, *Chronicon Syriacum*. Ed. by Paul Bedjan, Paris, 1890.
- Guillelmus de Rubruc. "Itinerarium." In *Sinica Francescana*, vol. 1, "Itinera et relationes fratrum minorum, saeculi XIII et XIV". Ed. by Anastasius Van De Wyngaert, 145–332. Firenze, 1929.
- Hayton. *The Flower of Histories of the East*. Ed. and trans. Robert Bedrosian. Long Branch (NJ), 2004.
- Hayton Armeno. *La Storia dei Tartari di Hayton l'Armeno*. Giovan Battista Ramusio, *Navigazioni e Viaggi*, vol. 111, pp. 299–355. Torino: Einaudi.
- Hethum. *Héthoum l'Historien*, «RHC», Documents Arméniens, 1, Paris 1869: 467–687.
- Holmes McNeal, Edgar. *Robert of Clari. The Conquest of Constantinople*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2005.
- Ibn al-Athir/Defremery, M. Defremery, *Fragments de Geographes et d'Historiens arabes et persans inedit*, "JA", IV series, 13, 1848.
- Ibn al-Athir/RHC, RHC: Hist. Orient, 11, 1887.
- Ibn al-Athir/Richards, Richards, Donald Sidney, ed. *The Chronicle of Ibn al-Athir for the Crusading Period from al-Kamil fi'l-Ta'rikh*. 3 parts. Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2006–2010.
- Ibn al-Athir/Tornberg, Ibn al-Athir, *Ibn al-Athiri chronicon quod Perfectissimum inscribitur*, ed. C.I. Tornberg, 1, 1851–1853, 11, 1867–1876.
- Ibn Jubayr. *Viaggio in Spagna, Sicilia, Siria e Palestina, Mesopotamia, Arabia, Egitto*. Ed. Celestino Schiaparelli. Palermo: Sellerio, 1995.
- Ibn Khaldūn. *Discours sur l'Histoire universelle Al-Muqaddima*. Ed. and trans. by Vincent Monteil. Arles: Actes Sud, 1997.
- Juvaini, Ata Malik. *Gengis Khan, il conquistatore del mondo*, a cura di G. Scarcia, Milan: Mondadori, 1962. Rist. 1991.
- Juvaini, Ata-Malik. *The History of the World Conqueror*. Trans. by John Andrew Boyle. 2 Vols. Manchester, 1959. Repr. 1997.
- Juzjani, Minhaj-ud-Din. *Tabaqāt-e Nāṣirī: A General History of the Muhammadan Dynasties of Asia*. Ed. and trans. Henry George Raverty. London: Gilbert & Rivington, 1881.
- Kinnamos, John. *The Deeds of John and Manuel Comnenus*. Trans. Charles M. Brand. New York: Columbia University Press, 1976.
- Kirakos Gandzakets'i. *History of the Armenians*. Ed. and trans. by Robert Bedrosian. New York, 1986.

- Li Chin-ch'ang. *The travels of an Alchemist: The Journey of the Taoist Chang-chun from China to the Hindukush at the Summons of Chingiz Khan*. Ed. Arthur Waley. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963.
- Miklosich, Franz, and Joseph Mueller. *Acta et diplomata Graeca medii aevi sacra et profana collecta*. Vol. 5. C. Gerold, 1887.
- Milani, Piero. *La schiavitù nel pensiero politico. Dai greci al basso Medioevo*. Milano: Giuffrè, 1972.
- Mitchell, Robert, and Neville Forbes. *The Chronicle of Novgorod, 1016–1471*. London, 1914.
- Mohammed en-Nasawi, "Histoire du sultan Djelal ed-Din Mankobirti, prince du Kharezm." Ed. Octave Houdas. *École des langues orientales vivantes* x. Paris: Leroux, 1895.
- Mustawfi Hamd-Allah. *The Geographical Part of Nuzhat al-Qulub*. Trans. Guy Le Strange. Leiden and Berlin: Brill and Luzac, 1919.
- Niceta Coniata. *Nicetae Choniatae Historia*, ed. Jean Louis Van Dieten, Berlin: De Gruyter, 1975.
- Niketas Choniatēs. *O city of Byzantium, Annals of Niketas Choniatēs*, ed. Herry J. Magoulias, Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1984.
- Otto Frisingensis. *Otonis episcopi Frisingensis Chronica, sive Historia de duabus civitatibus*, ed. Adolf Hofmeister, Hannover: Hahn, 1984.
- Pian del Carpine, Giovanni. *Storia dei Mongoli*, a cura di P. Daffinà, C. Leonardi, M.C. Lungarotti, E. Menestò, L. Petech. Spoleto: CISAM, 1989.
- Polo, Marco. *Il Milione*. Ed. by Marcello Ciccuto. Milano: Mondadori, 1998.
- Psello, Michele. *Imperatori di Bisanzio, Cronografia*, ed. a cura di D. Del Corno, S. Impellizzeri, U. Criscuolo, S. Ronchey, 2 Vols. Milano, 1997.
- Pullé, Giorgio. *Historia Mongalorum: viaggio di F. Giovanni da Pian del Carpine ai Tartari nel 1245–47*. Firenze: Tipografia G. Carnesecchi e figli, 1913.
- Quatremère, Etienne. *Histoire des Mongols de la Perse*, t. 1. Paris: Imprimerie Royale, 1836.
- Rashiduddin/Thackston. *Rashiduddin Fazlullah's Jami'ü't-Tawarikh: Compendium of Chronicles: A History of the Mongols*. 3 vols. Eds. Wheeler M. Thackston. Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1998.
- Rašid ad-din. "Jami' at-tawarikh." *Sbornik Letopis'ej*, tomo I (2 Vols.) trad. e cura di L.A. Ketagurov e Smirnova, O.I Moskva-Leningrad, 1952.
- Rašid ad-din. "Jami' at-tawarikh." *Sbornik Letopis'ej*, Vol. III trad. e cura di A.K. Arends, Baku, 1957.
- Rašid ad-din. "Jami' at-tawarikh." *Sbornik Letopis'ej*, tomo. II trad. e cura di Ju.P. Verkovskij, Moskva-Leningrad, 1960.
- Roberto De Clari. *La conquista di Costantinopoli (1198–1216)*. Ed. Annamaria Nada Patrone. Genova: 1972.

- Roller, Duane. *The Geography of Strabo: An English Translation, with Introduction and Notes*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.
- Šachmatov, Aleksej A. *Polnoe Sobranie Russkich Letopisej, Ipat'evskaja Letopis'*. Moskva, 1962. Samuel Anetsi, *Chronique Universelle*. In *ecueil des historiens des croisades*, T. I: *Documents Arméniens*, 445–468. Paris: Imprimerie Impériale, 1869–1906.
- Saronne, Edgardo T. *Pianto sulla distruzione di Rjazan'*. 171–224. Parma: Pratiche, 1992.
- Spuler, Bertold. *History of the Mongols. Based on Eastern and Western Accounts of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries*. Berkeley (CA): University of California Press, 1972 (repr. New York: Barnes and Nobles, 1996).
- Tacitus, Publius Cornelius, Bianca Ceva, and Cesare Questa. *Annali*. Milano: RCS Libri & Grandi opere, 2007.
- Tamm, Marek, Linda Kaljundi, and Carlsten Selch Jensen, eds. *Crusading and the Chronicle writing on the Medieval Baltic Frontier. A Companion to the Chronicle of Henry of Livonia*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2011.
- Thomas, Georg Martin, and Gottlieb Lukas Friedrich Tafel, eds. *Urkunden zur alteren Handels- und Staatsgeschichte der Republik Venedig: mit besonderer Beziehung auf Byzant und die Levante: vom neunten bis zum Ausgang des funfzehnten Jahrhunderts*. Wien, 1856.
- Van den Wyngaert, Anastasius. *Fr. Johannes de Plano Carpini, Ystoria Mongalorum, "Sinica Franciscana", I: Itinera et relationes Fratrum Minorum saeculi XIII et XIV*. Quaracchi: Collegio Bonaventura, 1929.
- Wassaf, Abdallāh Ibn-Faḍlallāh. *Geschichte Wassaf's*. Ed. by Joseph Hammer-Purgstall. Wien: Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2010.
- William of Rubruck. *The mission of Friar William of Rubruck: his journey to the court of the Great Khan Möngke, 1253–1255*. Ed. by, Peter Jackson, and David Morgan. London: Hakluyt Society, 1990.
- Zenkovsky, Betty Jean, and Serge A. Zenkovsky. *The Nikonian chronicle Vol. 1*. Princeton: Kingston Press, 1984.
- Zenkovsky, Betty Jean, and Serge A. Zenkovsky. *The Nikonian chronicle Vol. 2*. Princeton: Kingston Press, 1984.

Secondary Sources

- Ahrweiler, Hélène. "La frontière et les frontières de Byzance en Orient." In *Actes de le XIV Congrès International des Études byzantines*, 209–230. Bucaresti, 1974.
- Albertoni, Giuseppe, and Luigi Provero. *Il feudalesimo in Italia*. Roma: Carocci, 2003.
- Allen, William Edward. *A History of the Georgian People*. London: Kegan Paul, 1932, repr. 1971.

- Allsen, Thomas T. "The Circulation of Military Technology in the Mongolian Empire." In *Warfare in Inner Asian History (500–1800)*, 265–93. Leiden: Brill, 2002.
- Allsen, Thomas T. "Guard and Government in the Reign of the Grand Qan Mongke, 1251–59." *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 46.2 (1986): 495–521.
- Allsen, Thomas T. "Mongolian Princes and their Merchant Partners." *Asia Major* 2 (1989): 83–126.
- Allsen, Thomas T. "Mongolian Princes and Their Merchant Partners." *Asia Major* 2.2 (1989): 83–126.
- Allsen, Thomas T. "Mongols and North Caucasia." *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 7 (1987–91): 5–40.
- Allsen, Thomas T. "Mongols as Vectors for Cultural Transmission." In *The Cambridge History of Inner Asia. The Chinggisid Period*. Ed. Nicola Di Cosmo, Allen J. Frank, Peter B. Golden, 135–54. Cambridge-New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- Allsen, Thomas T. *Commodity and Exchange in the Mongol Empire: A Cultural History of Islamic Textiles*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- Allsen, Thomas T. *Culture and Conquest in Mongol Eurasia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.
- Allsen, Thomas T. *Mongol Imperialism: The Policies of the Grand Qan Möngke in China, Russia, and the Islamic Lands, 1251–1259*. Berkeley (CA): University of California Press, 1987.
- Amitai, Reuven. "Diplomacy and the Slave Trade in the Eastern Mediterranean: A Re-examination of the Mamluk-Byzantine-Genoese Triangle in the Late Thirteenth Century in Light of the Existing Early Correspondence." *Oriente moderno* 88.2 (2008): 349–68.
- Amitai, Reuven. "Jews at the Mongol Court in Iran: Cultural Brokers or Minor Actors in a Cultural Boom?." In *Cultural Brokers at Mediterranean Courts in the Middle Ages*. Ed. Nikolas Jaspert, Marc von der Höh, Jenny Rahel Oesterle, 33–45. Leiden: Brill, 2013.
- Amitai, Reuven. "The Conversion of the Ilkhan Tegüder Ahmad to Islam." *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 25 (2001): 15–43.
- Amitai, Reuven. "Political legitimization in the Ilkhanate: More Thoughts on the Mongol Imperial Ideology, the Introduction of Muslim Justification, and the Revival of Iranian Ideals." In *New Approaches to Ilkhanid History*. Ed. Timothy May, Bayarsaikahn Dashdondog, and Christopher P. Atwood, 209–48. Leiden: Brill, 2020.
- Amitai-Preiss, Reuven and David Morgan. *The Mongol Empire and its Legacy*. Leiden: Brill, 2000.
- Amitai-Preiss, Reuven. *Mongols and Mamluks: The Mamluk-Īlkhānīd War, 1260–1281*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.
- Amitai-Preiss, Reuven. "Sufis and Shamans: Some Remarks on the Islamization of the Mongols in the Ilkhanate." *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 42 (1999): 27–46.

- Andrea, Alfred J., and Brett E. Whale. *Contemporary Sources for the Fourth Crusade*. Leiden: Brill, 2008.
- Angold, Michael J. *The Fourth Crusade: Event and Context*. New York: Longman, 2015.
- Angold, Michael J. *The Byzantine Empire 1025–1204. A political history*. London-New York: Longman, 1997.
- Artamonov, Michajl I. *Istorija Khazar*. Leningrad, 1962.
- Arzoumanian, Zaven. *Studies in Armenian Historiography: Bishop Sebeos Lewond the Priest, Kirakos of Gandzak*. Wynnewood (PA), 1981.
- Ashtor, Elyanu. *A Social and Economic History of the Near East in the Middle Ages*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1976.
- Ashtor, Elyanu. *Levant Trade in the later Middle Ages*. Princeton (NJ): Princeton University Press, 1983.
- Ashtor, Elyanu. *Storia economica e sociale del Vicino Oriente nel Medioevo*. Torino: Einaudi, 1982.
- Aubin, Jean. “Les princes d’Ormuz du XIII^e au XV^e siècle.” *Journal Asiatique* 241 (1953): 89–99.
- Ayalon, David. “The Great Yasa of Chingiz Khan: a re-examination.” *Studia Islamica* 33 (1971): 97–140.
- Bais, Marco. *Albània Caucasica. Ethnos, storia, territorio attraverso le fonti greche, latine e armene*. Milano: Mimesis, 2001.
- Balard, Michel. *La Romanie Génoise (XII^e–début du XV^e siècle)*. 2 Vols. Gênes; Rome: École française de Rome, 1978.
- Banescă, Nicolae. *La domination byzantine à Matracha (Tmutorokan) en Zichie, en Khazarie, et en « Russie » à l’époque des Comnènes*. Bucaresti: Academie Roumaine, Bulletin de la Section Historique, 1941.
- Barfield, Thomas. *The perilous frontier: nomadic empires and China, 221 BC to AD 1757*. Thomas Barfield, 1992.
- Barker, Hannah. *That Most Precious Merchandise: The Mediterranean Trade in Black Sea Slaves, 1260–1500*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019.
- Barta, Antal. “The Typology of Nomadic Empires.” In *Popoli delle steppe, Unni, Avari, Ungari*. 23–29 aprile 1987, 151–74. Spoleto: Centro Italiano di Studi sull’alto medioevo, 1988.
- Bartold, Vladimir V. *Turkestan Down to the Mongol Invasion*. London: E.J.W. Gibb Memorial Trust, 1977.
- Bausani, Alessandro. “Religion in the Saljuq Period.” In *The Cambridge History of Islam*. Vol. 5, 283–302. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968.
- Bausani, Alessandro. “Religion under the Mongols.” In *The Cambridge History of Islam*. Vol. 5, 538–49. Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 1968.
- Bedrosian, Robert Gregory. *The Turco-Mongol Invasions and the Lords of Armenia in the 13th–14th centuries*. New York: Columbia University, 1979.

- Beihammer, Alexander Daniel. *Byzantium and the Emergence of Muslim-Turkish Anatolia, ca. 1040–1130*. Vol. 20. Taylor & Francis, 2017.
- Berend, Nora. "Cuman Integration in Hungary." In *Nomads in the Sedentary World*. Ed. Andre Wink and Anatoly M. Khazanov, 103–27. London: Routledge, 2012.
- Berindei and Gilles Veinstein, "La Tana-Azaq de la présence italienne à l'emprise ottomane (fin XIII^e–milieu XVI^e siècle)." *Turcica* VIII (1976): 110–201.
- Beševliev, Veselin. *Die protobulgarische Periode der bulgarischen Geschichte*. Amsterdam: Hakkert, 1981.
- Bibikov, Michajl V. "Istočnikovedčeskie problemy izučeniia istorii kočevnikov v Nižem Podunav'e v XII veke." *RRH*, 19 (1980): 47–52.
- Bibikov, Michajl V. *Vizantijskie istočniki po istorii drevnej Rusi i Kavkaza*. Sankt Peterburg: Aleteja, 2001.
- Biran, Michal. "The Islamisation of Hülegü: Imaginary Conversion in the Ilkhanate." *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 26, no. 1–2 (2016): 79–88.
- Biran, Michal. "The Mongol Empire: The State of the Research." *History Compass* 11 (2013): 1021–33.
- Bloch, Marc. "Come e perché finì la schiavitù antica." In *La servitù nella società medievale*. Ed. Giovanni Cherubini, 3–40. Firenze: La Nuova Italia, 1993.
- Bloch, Marc. "Comment et pourquoi finit l'esclavage antique," *Annales* V/II (1947): 30–44, 161–70.
- Bold, Bat-Ochir. *Mongolian Nomadic Society: A Reconstruction of the 'Medieval' History of Mongolia*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2002 (repr. London: Routledge, 2016).
- Borbone, Pier Giorgio. "The History of Mar Yahballaha and Rabban Sawma as a Source for Ilkhanid History." In *New Approaches to Ilkhanid History*. Ed. Timothy May, Bayarsaikahn Dashdondog, and Christopher P. Atwood, 349–72. Leiden: Brill, 2020.
- Borisov, Nikolay S. "Otechestvennaya istoriografiya o vliyanii tataro-mongol'skogo nashestvija na russkuyu kul'turu." *Problemy istorii SSSR* V (1976) 129–46.
- Bortoli, Anne and Kazanski, Michael. "Kherson and its Region." In *The Economic History of Byzantium: From the Seventh Through the Fifteenth Century*. Ed. Angeliki Laiou, 659–65. Washington (DC): Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2002.
- Bosworth, Clifford E. "Early Sources for the History of the First Four Ghaznavid Sultans (977–1041)." In *The Medieval History of Iran, Afghanistan and Central Asia*, 3–22. London: Variorum, 1977.
- Bosworth, Clifford E. *The Ghaznavids: Their Empire in Afghanistan and Eastern Iran*, 994–1040. Edinburgh: University Press, 1963.
- Bosworth, Clifford Edmund. "Kimäk." In *EI*, V (1986): 107–08.
- Boyle, John A. "The Il-khans of Persia and the Princes of Europe." *Central Asiatic Journal* 20.1/2 (1976): 25–40.
- Boyle, John A. "Dynastic and political History of the il-Khāns." In *The Cambridge History of Iran*. 5, 303–421. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968.

- Boyle, John A. "Kiriakos of Ganjak on the Mongols." *Central Asiatic Journal* 8.3 (1963): 199–205, 207–214.
- Boyle, John A. "The Death of the Last 'Abbasid Caliph': A Contemporary Muslim Account." *Journal of Semitic Studies* 6 (1961): 145–61.
- Brack, Jonathan. "Rashīd al-Dīn: Buddhism in Iran and the Mongol Silk Roads." In *Along the Silk Roads in Mongol Eurasia. Generals, Merchants, and Intellectuals*. Ed. Jonathan Brack, Michale Biran, and Francesca Fiaschetti, 44–63. Oakland: University of California Press, 2020.
- Brătianu, George Ioan. *La mer Noire: des origines à la conquête ottomane*. Vol. 9. Societas academica Dacoromana, 1969.
- Bratianu, Gheorghe I. "La question de l'approvisionnement de Constantinople à l'époque byzantine et ottomane." *Byzantion* 5 (1929–30): 83–107.
- Bratianu, Gheorghe I. *Recherches sur le commerce génois dans la mer Noire au XIII^e siècle*. Paris: Geuthner, 1929.
- Bratianu, Gheorghe I. *La mer Noire: Des origines à la conquete ottomane*. Monachii: Societatea Academica Romana, 1969.
- Broadbridge, Anne F. *Women and the Making of the Mongol Empire*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018.
- Bromberg, "Toponymical and historical Miscellanies." *Byzantion* XII (1937): 459–65.
- Buell, Paul D. "Šigi-Qutuqu." In *In the Service of the Khan. Eminent Personalities of the Early Mongol-Yüan Period (1200–1300)*. Ed. Igor De Rachewiltz, 75–94. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1993.
- Buell, Paul D. *Historical Dictionary of the Mongol World Empire*. Lanham (MA)-Oxford: Scarecrow, 2003.
- Bundy, David. "The Syriac and Armenian Christian Responses to the Islamification of the Mongols." In *Medieval Christian Perceptions of Islam. A Book of Essays*. Ed. John Victor Tolan, 33–54. New York: Psychology Press, 2000.
- Bunijatov, Zija M. *Gosudarstvo atabekov Azerbaidžana (1136–1225 godu)*. Baku, 1978.
- Büntgen, Ulf and Nicola Di Cosmo. "Climatic and environmental aspects of the Mongol withdrawal from Hungary in 1242 CE". *Scientific reports*, 6 (2016): 25606.
- Büntgen, Ulf and Nicola Di Cosmo. "Reply to 'Climate of doubt: a re-evaluation of Büntgen and Di Cosmo's environmental hypothesis for the Mongol withdrawal from Hungary, 1242 CE.'" *Scientific Reports* 7 (2017): 20171005.
- Byrne, Eugene H. *Genoese shipping in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries*. Cambridge: The Mediaeval Academy of America, 1930.
- Cahen, Claude, and J. Jones-Williams. *Pre-Ottoman Turkey*. London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1968.
- Cahen, Claude. "V. The Turkish Invasion: The Selchiikids." In *A History of the Crusades, Volume 1*, pp. 135–176. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016.

- Carile, Antonio. "I nomadi nelle fonti bizantine." In *Popoli delle steppe, Unni, Avari, Ungari*. 23–29 aprile 1987, 55–87. Spoleto: Centro Italiano di Studi sull'alto medioevo, 1988.
- Carile, Antonio. "Il Caucaso e l'impero bizantino." In *Il Caucaso: cerniera fra culture dal Mediterraneo alla Persia (secoli IV–XI)*. 2 vols., 9–80. Spoleto: Centro Italiano di Studi sull'alto medioevo, 1996.
- Carile, Antonio. "L'ecumene romano-cristiana e i popoli della Rus'." *Rivista di Bizantinistica* 2 (1992): 11–33.
- Chalandon, Ferdinand. *Essai sur le règne d'Alexis I. Comnène (1081–1118)*. New York: Franklin, 1960.
- Chalandon, Ferdinand. *Histoire de la première croisade jusqu'à l'élection de Godefroi de Bouillon*. New York: B. Franklin, 1972.
- Charachidzé, Georges. *Introduction à l'étude de la féodalité géorgienne. Le code de Georges le Brillant*. Paris-Genève: Droz, 1971.
- Charanis, Peter. "The Armenians in the Byzantine Empire." *Byzantinoslavica* 22, (1961): 196–240.
- Cheynet, Jean-Claude. "Manzikert – un désastre militaire?" *Byzantion* 50 (1980): 410–38.
- Christiansen, Eric. *The Northern Crusades*. London: Penguin, 1997.
- Chrystalëv, Denis G. *Rus': ot nashestvija do "iga". 30–40gg. XIII veka*. Sankt Peterburg: Evrazija, 2008.
- Čiževska, Tatjana. *Glossary of The Igor' tale*. The Hague: Mouton and Co, 1966.
- Claessen, Henri J.M., and Peter Skalnik. 1978. *The Early State*. Berlin-Boston: De Gruyter, 1978 (repr. 2010).
- Claessen, Henri J.M., and Piet van de Velde. *Early state dynamics*. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1987.
- Claessen, Henri J., and Peter Skalnik. *The Study of the State*. Berlin-Boston: De Gruyter, 1981 (repr. 2011).
- Claessen, Henri J.M., and Peter Skalník, eds. *The Early State*. Vol. 32. Walter de Gruyter, 2011.
- Cluse, Christoph, and Reuven Amitai. *Slavery and the Slave Trade in the Eastern Mediterranean (c.1000–1500ce)*. Turnhout: Brepols, 2017.
- Conrad, Lawrence I. "On the Arabic Chronicle of Bar Hebraeus: His aims and audience." *Parole de l'Orient* XIX (1994): 320–78.
- Curta, Florin. *Eastern Europe in the Middle Ages (500–1300) (2 vols)*. Brill, 2019.
- Curta, Florin. *Southeastern Europe in the Middle Ages, 500–1250*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- Dall'Aglia, Francesco. "The Second Bulgarian Kingdom and the Latin Empire of Constantinople: A General Overview." *Palaeobulgarica* 1 (2013): 109–117.
- Dall'Aglia, Francesco. "The Military Alliance between the Cumans and Bulgaria from the Establishment of the Second Bulgarian Kingdom to the Mongol Invasion." *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 16 (2008–09): 29–54.

- Dashdondog, Bayarsaykhan. *The Mongols and the Armenians (1220–1335)*. Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2011.
- Dashdondog, Bayarsaykhan. "The Mongol Conquerors in Armenia." In *Caucasus during the Mongol Period. Der Kaukasus in der Mongolenzeit*. Ed. Jurgen Tubach, Sophie G. Vashalomidze and Manfred Zimmer, 53–82. Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2013.
- Dashdondog, Bayarsaykhan. "Armenian hagiography on the Ilkhans." In *New Approaches to Ilkhanid History*. Ed. Timothy May, Bayarsaikahn Dashdondog, and Christopher P. Atwood, 373–84. Leiden: Brill, 2020.
- De Hartog, Leo. "The Army of Genghis Khan." *Army Quarterly and Defence Journal* 109.4 (1979): 476–85.
- De Nicola, Bruno. *Women in Mongol Iran: The kātūns, 1206–1335*. Edimburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017.
- De Rachewilts, Igor. "The Title Cinggis qan/qaghan Re-examined." In *Gedanke und Wirkung*. Ed. Walther Heissig and Klaus Sagaster, 281–98. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrossowitz, 1989.
- De Rachewiltz, Igor. "Personnel and Personalities in North China in the Early Mongol Period." *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 9 (1966): 88–144.
- De Rachewiltz, Igor. "Prester John and Europe's Discovery of East Asia." *East Asian History* 11 (1996): 59–74.
- Dédéyan, Gerard, Boghos Levon Zekiyani, and Antonia Arslan, eds. *Storia degli armeni*. Guerini e Associati, 2002.
- DeWeese, D. "Cultural Transmission and Exchange in the Mongol Empire: Notes from the Biographical Dictionary of Ibn al-Fuwaṭī." In *Beyond the legacy of Genghis Khan*. Ed. Linda Komaroff, 9–29. Leiden: Brill, 2006.
- DeWeese, Devin. *Islamization and Native Religion in the Golden Horde: Baba Tŷkles and Conversion to Islam in Historical and Epic Tradition*. Penn State Press, 2010.
- Di Cosmo, Nicola, et al. "Environmental stress and steppe nomads: Rethinking the history of the Uyghur Empire (744–840) with paleoclimate data." *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 48.4 (2018): 439–463.
- Di Cosmo, Nicola. "State formation and periodization in Inner Asian history." *Journal of World History* (1999): 1–40.
- Di Cosmo, Nicola. "Ancient Inner Asian Nomads: Their Economic Basis and Its Significance in Chinese History." *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 53–4 (1994): 1092–26.
- Di Cosmo, Nicola. "Black Sea Emporia and the Mongol Empire: A Reassessment of the Pax Mongolica." *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 53 (2010): 88–91.
- Di cosmo, Nicola. "Mongols and Merchants on the Black Sea Frontier in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries: Convergences and Conflicts" In *Turco-Mongol Nomads and Sedentary Societies*. Ed. by Reuven amitai and Michal Biran, 391–424. Leiden: Brill, 2005.

- Di Cosmo, Nicola. "State Formation and Periodization in Inner Asian History." *Journal of World History* 10.1 (1999): 1–40.
- Di Cosmo, Nicola. "Why Qara Qorum? Climate and Geography in the Early Mongol Empire." *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 21 (2014–2015): 67–78.
- Diaconu, Petre. "K voprosu o glinjanix kotlax na territorii RNR." *Dacia*, ns 8. 1964.
- Diaconu, Petre. *Les Coumans au Bas-Danube aux XI^e et XII^e siècles*. Bucuresti: Editura Academiei Republicii socialiste România, 1978.
- Diehl, Charles. *Byzance: grandeur et décadence*. Paris, Flammarion, 1919.
- Dondua, Vladimir D. and M.M. Berdzenishili. *Zhizn' caricy caric Tamar*. Tbilisi: Mecniereba, 1985.
- Dorn, B.A. "Kaspij. O poxodax drevnix rusov v Tabaristan." *ZIAN* 26 (1875): 524–30.
- Duičev, Ivan. "Bisanzio e il mondo slavo." *Medioevo Bizantino-slavo* I, (1965): 3–22.
- Duičev, Ivan. « Les Slaves et Byzance. » *Études historiques à l'occasion du XI^e Congrès international des sciences historiques*, 31–77. Sofja, 1960.
- Dunlop, Douglas Morton. "The Khazars." In *The World History of the Jewish People* Vol. 2.2, *The Dark Ages: Jews in Christian Europe 711–1096*, edited by Cecil Roth, 325–355. London: Allen, 1966.
- Dunlop, Douglas Morton. *The History of the Jewish Khazars*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1954.
- Dunn, J. Li. *The Ageless Chinese: A History*. New York: Scribner's Son, 1978.
- Dvorník, Francis, and Romilly James Heald Jenkins. *Constantine Porphyrogenitus, De administrando imperio; a commentary*. Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2012.
- Eastmond, Anthony. "The Empire of Trebizond." In *Byzantium's Other Empire: Trebizond*. Ed. by Anthony Eastmond, 31–58. Istanbul: Koç Üniversitesi Anadolu Medeniyetleri Araştırma Merkezi, 2016.
- Eastmond, Antony. *Art and Identity in Thirteenth-Century Byzantium: Hagia Sophia and the Empire of Trebizond*. Routledge, 2017.
- Eastmond, Antony. *Royal Imagery in Medieval Georgia*. Penn State Press, 2010.
- Enkhbold, Enerelt. "The Role of the Ortoq in the Mongol Empire in Forming Business Partnerships." *Central Asian Survey* 38.4 (2019): 531–47.
- Favereau, Marie. "The Golden Horde and the Mamluks: The Birth of a Diplomatic Set-Up (660–5/1261–7)." In *Mamluk Cairo, a Crossroads for Embassies. Studies on Diplomacy and Diplomatics*. Ed. by Bauden, Frédéric, and Malika Dekkiche, 302–26. Leiden: Brill, 2019.
- Favereau, Marie. "The Golden Horde and the Mamluks," *Golden Horde Review* 5.1 (2017): 93–115.
- Fedorov-Davydov, German A. *Zolotoordynskie goroda povolzh'ja: keramika, trgovlja, myt*. Moskva: Izd. Moskovskov. Univers, 1994.

- Ferrari, Aldo. *La foresta e la steppa. Il mito dell'Eurasia nella cultura russa*. Milano: Scheiwiller, 2003 (repr. Mimesis, 2012).
- Forcheri, Giovanni. *Navi e navigazione a Genova nel Trecento: il Liber Gazarie*. Bordighera: Istituto internazionale di studi liguri, 1974.
- Gadlo, Aleksandr V. *K istorii Tmutorokanskogo kniazhestva vo vtoroi polovine XI v., Slaviano-russkie drevnosti, I, Istoriko-arkheologicheskoe izuchenie Drevnei Rusi*. Leningrad, 1988.
- Gallina, Mario. *Potere e società a Bisanzio. Dalla fondazione di Costantinopoli al 1204*. Torino: Einaudi, 1995.
- Garland, Linda. *Byzantine Empresses: Women and Power in Byzantium, AD 527–1204*. New York: Routledge, 1999.
- Garsoïan, Nina and Bernadette Martin Hisard, "Unité et diversité de la Caucasic Médiévale (IV^e–XI^e s.)." In *Il Caucaso: cerniera fra culture dal Mediterraneo alla Persia (secoli IV–XI)*. 2 vols., 275–347. Spoleto: Centro Italiano di Studi sull'alto medioevo, 1996.
- Geary, Patrick J. *The Myth of Nations: The Medieval Origins of Europe*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003.
- Geary, Paul J. "Barbarians and Ethnicity." In *Late Antiquity: A Guide to the Postclassical World*, eds. Grabar, Oleg, G.W. Bowersock, and Peter Brown, 107–29. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999.
- Geary, Paul J. "Ethnic identity as a Situational Construct in the Early Middle Ages." *Mitteilungen der Anthropologischen Gesellschaft in Wien* 113 (1983): 15–26.
- Gillet, Andrew. (Ed). *On Barbarian Identity. Critical Approaches to Ethnicity in the Early Middle Ages*. Turnhout: Brepols, 2002.
- Golden, "The peoples of the south Russian steppes." In *The Cambridge History of Early Inner Asia*. Ed. Denis Sinor, 256–84. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.
- Golden, Peter B. "Cumanica I: The Qipčaq in Georgia." *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 4 (1984): 45–87.
- Golden, Peter B. "Khazar studies: Achievements and Perspectives." In *The World of the Khazars New Perspectives*, 7–57. Leiden: Brill, 2007.
- Golden, Peter B. "Some Thoughts on the Origins of the Turks and the Shaping of the Turkic Peoples." *Contact and Exchange in the Ancient World* (2006): 136–157.
- Golden, Peter B. "The conversion of the Khazars to Judaism." *The World of the Khazars New Perspectives*. Leiden: Brill, 2007. 123–62.
- Golden, Peter B. "Černii Klobouci." In *Symbolae Turcologicae – Studies in Honour of Lars Johanson*, eds. Árpád Berta, Berndt Brendemoen, Claus Schönig, 97–107. Uppasala: Svenska Forskningsinstitutet i Istanbul, 1996.
- Golden, Peter B. "Cumanica I: The Qipčaq in Georgia." *Archivum Eurasiae medii aevi* 4 (1984): 45–87.

- Golden, Peter B. "Imperial Ideology and the Sources of Political Unity among the pre-Činggisid Nomads of Western Eurasia." *Archivum Eurasiae medii aevi* 2 (1982): 37–77.
- Golden, Peter B. "Khazaria and Judasim." In *Nomads and Their Neighbours in the Russian Steppe: Turks, Khazars and Qipchaqs*, 111, 127–156. Aldershot: Ashgate 2003.
- Golden, Peter B. "The Conversion of the Khazars to Judaism." In *The World of the Khazars New Perspectives*. Ed. by Golden, Peter B., Haggai Ben-Shammai, and András Róna-Tas, 123–60. Leiden: Brill, 2007.
- Golden, Peter B. "The Polovci Dikii." *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 3–4 (1979–1980): 296–309.
- Golden, Peter B. "The Question of the Rus' Qaganate." *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 2 (1982): 89–90.
- Golden, Peter B. "The Stateless Nomads of Early Medieval Central Eurasia." *Materialy po archeologii, istorii i étnografii Travrii* 20: 333–368 (2015): 333–368.
- Golden, Peter B. "The Turkic peoples and Caucasia." In *Nomads and Their Neighbours in the Russian Steppe: Turks, Khazars and Qipchaqs*, IV, 45–67. Aldershot: Ashgate 2003.
- Golden, Peter B. "Wolves, Dogs and Qipčaq Religion." *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* L (1997): 87–97.
- Golden, Peter B. *An Introduction to the History of the Turkic Peoples. Ethnogenesis and State-Formation in Medieval and Early Modern Eurasia and the Middle East*. Wiesbaden. Harrassowitz, 1992.
- Golden, Peter, Haggai Ben-Shammai, and András Róna-Tas, eds. *The World of the Khazars: New Perspectives. Selected Papers from the Jerusalem 1999 International Khazar Colloquium*. Brill, 2007.
- Golev, Konstantin. "On the Edge of 'Another World': The Balkans and Crimea as Contact Zones Between the Cuman-Qipchaqs and the Outside World." *Études Balkaniques* 54 (2018): 89–126.
- Golev, Konstantin. "The Cuman-Qipchaqs And Crimea: The Role of the Peninsula in the Nomads' Relations with the Outside World." *Archivum Eurasiae medii aevi* 24 (2018): 23–108.
- Golubovskij, Pëtr V. *Pechenegi, torki i polovcy do nashestvija tatar*, Kiev, 1884.
- Gordlevskij, Vladimir A. "Chto takoe bosyj volk? (K tolkovaiju Slova o polku Igoreve)." *Izdatel'stvo Akademii Nauk SSSR*. VI, 4 (1947): 317–37.
- Grekov, Boris D. "Volshkia Bolgary v IX–X vv." *Istoricheskij Zapiski* 14 (1945): 3–37.
- Grekov, Boris D., and Aleksandr I. Iakubovskii. *L'orda d'oro*. Roma: Editori riuniti, 1957.
- Grigor'ev, Vasil V. "Ob otnoshenijax mezhdru kochevymi narodami i osedlymi gosudarstvami." *Zhurnal Moskva Narodnogo Prosveshchenija* (1885): 1–27.
- Grousset, René. *Histoire de l'Arménie: des origines à 1071*. Payot, 1973.
- Grousset, René. *L'empire des steppes: Attila, Gengis-Khan, Tamerlan*. Paris: Boccard, 1969.

- Gumilev, Lev N. *Drevnie tjurki*. Moskva: Tovarishchestvo Klyshnikov, Komarov i Ko, 1993.
- Gumilëv, Lev Nikolaevič. *Drevnie turki*. Moskva: Nauka, 1967 (repr. 1993).
- Haji Khalifeh, and Geoffrey L. Lewis. *The Balance of Truth*. London: Allen and Unwin, 1957.
- Halperin, Charles J. "The Kipchak Connection: The Ilkhans, the Mamluks and Ayn Jalut." *Bulletin of The School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London* (2000): 229–245.
- Halperin, Charles J. *Russia and the Golden Horde: the Mongol Impact on Mediaeval Russian History*. Bloomington (IN): Indiana Univ. Press, 2010.
- Halperin, Charles. "George Vernadsky, Eurasianism, the Mongols and Russia." *Slavic Review* 41/3 (1982): 477–93.
- Halperin, Charles. "Omissions of National Memory. Russian Historiography on the Golden Horde as Politics of Inclusion and Exclusion," *Ab Imperio*, (2004): 131–44.
- Halperin, Charles. "Russia in the Mongol Empire in Comparative Perspective." *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 43 (1983): 239–61.
- Halperin, Charles. "Soviet Historiography on Russia and the Mongols." *Russian Review* 41/3 (1982): 306–22.
- Halperin, Charles. *The Tatar Yoke*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009.
- Hardi, Dura. 2016. "Cumans and Mongols in the Region of Srem in 1241–1242: A Discussion on the Extent of Devastation." *Istražen'a* 27: 84–105.
- Heyd, Wilhelm von. *Storia del commercio del Levante nel medioevo*. Torino: UTET, 1913.
- Hope, Michael. "The 'Nawrūz King': The Rebellion of Amir Nawrūz in Khurasan (688–694/1289–94) and its Implications for the Ilkhan Polity at the End of the Thirteenth-Century." *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 78.3 (2015): 451–73.
- Hope, Michael. *Power, Politics, and Tradition in the Mongol Empire and the Ilkhanate of Iran*. Oxford: Oxford University Press 2016.
- Humphrey, Caroline, and Altanhuu Hürelbaatar. "Regret as a Political Intervention: An Essay in the Historical Anthropology of the Early Mongols," *Past and Present* 186.1 (2005): 3–45.
- Iorga, Nicola. "Une nouvelle théorie) sur l'origine et le caractère de l'empire de Trébizonde," *Revue historique du sud-est européen* XIII (1970–71): 107–11.
- Jackson, Peter. *The Delhi Sultanate: A Political and Military History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- Jackson, Peter. "The Mongols and the Faith of the Conquered." In *Mongols, Turks and Others: Eurasian Nomads and the Sedentary World*. Ed. Reuven Amitai, and Michal Biran, 245–78. Leiden- Boston: Brill, 2005.
- Jackson, Peter. "The Dissolution of the Mongol Empire." *Central Asiatic Journal* 22 (1978): 184–244.

- Jackson, Peter. *The Mongols and the Islamic World. From Conquest to Conversion*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017.
- Jackson, Peter. "Reflections on the Islamization of Mongol Khans in Comparative Perspective," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 62 (2019): 356–87.
- Kamola, Stefan. "Salghurid History in the *Jāmi' al-Tawārikh*: a Preliminary Exploration of Its Composition and Transmission." In *New Approaches to Ilkhanid History*. Ed. Timothy May, Bayarsaikahn Dashdondog, and Christopher P. Atwood, 122–45. Leiden: Brill, 2020.
- Kargalov, Vadim V. *Vneshnepoliticheskie faktory razvitiya feodal'noj Rusi. Feodal'naja Rus' i kochevniki*. Moskva: 1967.
- Karpov, S. P. *L'Impero di Trebisonda, Venezia, Genova e Roma, 1204–1461*. Roma: Il Velcro, 1986.
- Karpov, Sergej P. "Empire of Great Comnenoi: Some Remarks on Particularities of its Foundation." In *Actes du XV^e Congrès International d'Études Byzantines*. 153–59. Athens, 1980.
- Karpov, Sergej P. "On the Origin of Medieval Tana." *Byzantino-Slavica* LVI (1995): 225–35.
- Karpov, Sergej P. *Ital'janskije morskije respubliki i Juznoe Prichernomor'e v XIII–XV vv.: problemy trgovli*. Moskva, 1990.
- Karpov, Sergej P. *La navigazione veneziana nel Mar Nero, XIII–XV secolo*. Ravenna: Il girasole, 2000.
- Karpov, Sergej P. *Srednevekovyj Pont*. New York (NY), 2001.
- Karpov, Sergej P. *Trapezundskaja imperija i zapadnoevropejskie gosudarstva v XIII–XV vv.* Moskva, 1981.
- Každan, Aleksandr P. *Bisanzio e la sua civiltà*. Bari: Laterza, 1983.
- Kazhdan, Aleksandr P. *Vizantijskaja kul'tura (X–XII vv.)*. Moskva: Nauka, 1968.
- Kedar, Binyamin Z. *Merchants in Crisis: Genoese and Venetian Men of Affairs and the Fourteenth-Century Depression*. New Haven (CT): Yale University Press, 1976.
- Khazanov, Anatoly M. *Nomads and the Outside World*. Madison (WI): University of Wisconsin Press, 1994.
- Kim, Hodong. "A Reappraisal of Güyük Khan." In *Mongols, Turks and Others: Eurasian Nomads and the Sedentary World*. Ed. Reuven Amitai, and Michal Biran, 309–38. Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2005.
- Kljuchevskij, Vassilij O. *Sochinenija v devjati tomach, Kurs russkoj istorij*. Vol. 1. Moskva, 1956.
- Koestler, Arthur. *The Thirteenth Tribe*. New York: Random House, 1976.
- Kokovcov, P.K., *Evreisko-Khazar'skaja Perepiska v X veke*. Leningrad: Nauk, 1932.
- Komaroff, Linda. (Ed.). *Beyond the Legacy of Genghis Khan*. Leiden: Brill, 2006.
- Köprülü, Mehmet Fuat. *The Seljuks of Anatolia*. University of Utah Press, 1992.

- Kovács, Szilvia. "Dynastic Relations Between Cumans and Neighbouring States." In *Proceedings of the Ninth Conference of the European Society for Central Asian Studies*, p. 200. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009.
- Krader, Lawrence. "The Origin of the State among the Nomads of Asia." *The Early State* 32 (1978): 93–108.
- Krader, Lawrence. *Formation of the State*. Englewood Cliffs (NJ): Prentice-Hall, 1968.
- Kradin, Nikolay N. "Nomadism, Evolution and World-Systems: Pastoral Societies in Theories of Historical Development," *Journal of World System Research* VIII.3 (2002): 368–88.
- Kradin, Nikolay N., and Thomas J. Barfield, eds. *Nomadic Pathways in Social Evolution*. Vol. 5. MeaBooks Inc, 2015.
- Kudrjashov, K.V. "O mestopolozhenii poloveckix vezh v severnom Prichernomor'e v XIIIv." *Trudy In-ta étnogr.* ns1, 1947.
- Kudrjašov, K.V. *Poloveckaja step'*. Moskva, 1948.
- Kuršanskis, Michel. "L'Empire de Trébizonde et la Géorgie." *Revue des études byzantines* 35.1 (1977): 237–256.
- Laiou, Angeliki E. "Exchange and trade, seventh-twelfth centuries." *The Economic History of Byzantium* 2 (2002): 697–770.
- Laiou, Angeliki E. *The Economic History of Byzantium: From the Seventh Through the Fifteenth Century*. Vol. 39. Dumbarton Oaks, 2002.
- Laiou, Angeliki E. *Urbs capta: The Fourth Crusade and its Consequences = La IV^e croisade et ses conséquences*. Paris: Lethielleux, 2006.
- Laiou, Angeliki E., and Charalampos Bouras. *The Economic History of Byzantium*. Dumbarton Oaks: Research Library and Collection, 2008.
- Laiou, Angeliki. "The Byzantine Economy in the Mediterranean Trade System: XIIIth–XVth Centuries." *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 34–35 (1980): 177–222.
- Lane, George. "Arghun Aqa: Mongol Beurocrat." *Iranian Studies* 32, (1999): 459–82.
- Lane, George. *Early Mongol Rule in Thirteenth-Century Iran: A Persian Renaissance*. London: Routledge, 2003.
- Lattimore, Owen. "The Geographical Factor in Mongol History." *The Geographical Journal* LXXXI.1 (1938): 1–16.
- Leciejewicz, Lech. *La nuova forma del mondo: la nascita della civiltà europea medievale*. Bologna: Il Mulino, 2004.
- Levi, Scott. "Turks and Tajiks in Central Asian History." *Everyday life in Central Asia: Past and Present* (2007): 15–31.
- Limonov, Jurij A. "Iz Istorij vostochnogo trgovli Vladimiro-Suzdal'kogo Knjazhestva: Mezhdunarodnye Svjazi Rossii do XVII v." *Sbornik Statei* (1961): 55–63.
- Ljaskoronskij, Vasilij G. *Russkie poxody v stepi v udelino-vechevoe vremja*, Sankt Peterburg: Senack, 1907.

- Lopez, Robert S. *Storia delle colonie genovesi nel Mediterraneo*. Genova: Marietti, 1996.
- Lopez, Roberto S. *Su e giù per la storia di Genova*. Genova: Università degli Studi di Genova, Istituto di Paleografia e storia medievale, 1975.
- Luisetto, Frédéric. *Arméniens et autres chrétiens d'Orient sous la domination mongole: L'Ilkhanat de Ghâzân 1295–1304*.
- Madgearu, Alexandru. *The Asanids: The Political and Military History of the Second Bulgarian Empire, 1185–1280*. Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2017.
- Madgearu, Alexandru. *Byzantine Military Organization on the Danube, 10th–12th Centuries*. Leiden-boston: Brill, 2013.
- Magdalino, Paul. *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenus, 1143–1180*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Magnus, Leonard Arthur. *The Tale of the Armament of Igor*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1915.
- Magomedov, Murad G. *Obrazovanie khazarского kaganata*. Nauka, Moskva, 1983.
- Mallet, Michael E. *The Florentine Galleys in the XVth Century*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1967.
- Maniatis, George C. "The Domain of Private Guilds in the Byzantine Economy, Tenth to Fifteenth Centuries." *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 55 (2001): 339–369.
- Mann, Robert. "The Silent Debate Over the Igor Tale." *Oral Tradition*. 30.1 (2016): 53–94.
- Martin, Janet. *Medieval Russia. 980–1584*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Martin, Janet. *Treasure of the Land of Darkness: The Fur Trade and its Significance for Medieval Russia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.
- Martin, Michael E. "The First Venetians in the Black Sea." *Archeion Pontou* 35 (1979): 111–122.
- Martinez, Arsenio, P. "Institutional Development, Revenues and Trade." In *The Cambridge History of Inner Asia. The Chinggisid Age*. Ed by Nicola Di Cosmo, Peter B. Golden, and Allen J. Frank, 89–108. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- Masson Smith, John. "Mongol Manpower and Persian Population." *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 18 (1975): 271–99.
- Masson Smith, John. "Ayn Jalut: Mamluk Success or Mongol Failure?" *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 44.2 (1984): 307–45.
- May, Timothy. *The Mongol Art of War*. Yardley (PA): Pen and Sword, 2007.
- May, Timothy. *The Mongol Conquests in World History*. London: Reaktion, 2012.
- Meillassoux, Claude. *Anthropology of Slavery: The Womb of Iron and Gold*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1995.
- Meillassoux, Claude. *Antropologia della schiavitù, il parto del guerriero e del mercante*. Milano: Mursia, 1992.
- Melville, Charles. "Anatolia Under the Mongols." In *The Cambridge History of Turkey* 1 (2009): 51–101.

- Melville, Charles. "History and myth: the Persianisation of Ghazan Khan." *Irano-Turkic cultural contacts in the 11th–17th centuries*: 133–60.
- Melville, Charles. Dokutz (Doquz) Kātūn. *Encyclopedia Iranica*. Accessed April 22, 2021. <https://iranicaonline.org/articles/dokuz-doquz-katun>.
- Meschia, Shot'ia and Iase Cincadze. *Iz istoria russo-gruzinskikh vzaimootnoshenij X–XVIII vv.* Tbilisi, 1958.
- Miklosisch, Franz. *Etymologisches Wörterbuch der Slavischen Sprachen*. Wien, 1886.
- Miller, William. *Trebizond: The Last Greek Empire*. London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1926.
- Minorsky, Vladimir. *Studies in Caucasian History: I. New Light on the Shaddadids of Ganja II. The Shaddadids of Ani III. Prehistory of Saladin*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957.
- Minuti, Rolando. *Oriente barbarico e storiografia settecentesca: rappresentazioni della storia dei Tartari nella cultura francese del XVIII secolo*. Venezia: Marsilio, 1994.
- Mirgaleev Il'nur M. "The Islamization of the Golden Horde: New Data." *Golden Horde Review* 1 (2016): 89–101.
- Mirgaleev, Il'nur Midkhatovich. "The Golden Horde Policies toward the Ilkhanate." *Golden Horde Review* 2 (2013): 217–27.
- Morgan, David O. "The 'Great Yasa of Chingiz Khan' and Mongol Law in the Ilkhanate." *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 49/1 (1986): 163–76.
- Morgan, David. "The Decline and Fall of the Mongol Empire." *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 19.4 (2009): 427–37.
- Morgan, David. *The Mongols*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2007.
- Mudell Mango, Marlia. *Byzantine Trade, 4th–12th Centuries. The Archaeology of Local, Regional and International Exchange: Papers of the Thirty-eighth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies*, St. John's College, University of Oxford, March 2004. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009.
- Munkuev, Nikolay C. "Zametki o drevnich mongolach." In *Tataro.mongoly v Azii i Evrope. Sbornik statei*. Ed. by S.L. Tichvinskij, 409–46. Moskva, 1977.
- Musso, Gian Giacomo. *Navigazione e commercio genovese con il Levante nei documenti dell'Archivio di Stato di Genova (secc. XIV–XV)*. Roma: Ministero per i Beni culturali, 1975.
- Mys'kov, E.P. *Politicheskaya istoriya Zolotoy Ordyy (1236–1313 gg.)*. Volgograd: Volgogradskogo Gos. Universiteta, 2003.
- Nicolle, David. *Manzikert 1071. The Breaking of Byzantium*. London: Osprey, 2003.
- Noonan, Thomas S. "Suzdalia's Eastern Trade in the Century Before the Mongol Conquest." « Cahiers du Monde Russe et Soviétique » XIX.4 (1978): 371–84.
- Noonan, Tomas S. "Rus', Pechenegs, and Polovtsy: Economic Interaction along the Steppe Frontier in the Pre-Mongol Era." *Russian history* 19.1–4 (1992): 301–26.

- Obolensky, Dimitri. *The Byzantine Commonwealth: Eastern Europe 500–1453*, London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1974.
- Obolensky, Dmitrij. "Svjazi mezhdu Vizantiej i Rus'ju v XI–XV vv." *Dok. Na XIII Meždunar. Kongr. Ist. Nauk*, Moskva, 1970.
- Olschki, Leonardo. *Marco Polo's Asia: An Introduction to His "Description of the World" Called "Il Milione"*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960.
- Ortalli, Gherardo, Giorgio Ravegnani, and Peter Schreiner. *Quarta crociata: Venezia, Bisanzio, Impero latino*. Venezia: Istituto veneto di scienze, lettere ed arti, 2007.
- Ostrogorski, George. *History of the Byzantine State*. Rutgers University Press, 1969.
- Ostrowsky, Donald. *Muscovy and the Mongols: Cross-Cultural Influences on the Steppe Frontier, 1304–1589*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Outtier, Bernard. "La Christianisation du Caucase." In *Il Caucaso: cerniera fra culture dal Mediterraneo alla Persia (secoli IV–XI)*. 2 vols., 553–68. Spoleto: Centro Italiano di Studi sull'alto medioevo, 1996.
- Peacock, A.C.S. *Great Seljuk Empire*. Edinburgh University Press, 2015.
- Peacock, Andrew C.S., and Sarah Nur Yildiz. *The Seljuks of Anatolia: Court and Society in the Medieval Middle East*. Bloomsbury, 2013.
- Pederson, N., A.E. Hessel, N. Baatarbileg, K.J. Anchukaitis, and N. Di Cosmo. "Pluvials, Droughts, the Mongol Empire, and Modern Mongolia." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 111(12):4375–4379. 2014.
- Pelliot, Paul, Louis Hambis. *Histoire des campagnes de Gengis Khan*. Leiden: Brill, 1951.
- Pelliot, Paul. "A propos des Coumans." *Journal Asiatique* 15.2 (1920): 145–67.
- Pelliot, Paul. "Chrétiens d'Asie Centrale et d'Extrême-Orient." *T'oung pao* 15.5 (1914): 623–44.
- Pelliot, Paul. "Qubčiri-qubčir et qubč'ur-qubčur." *T'oung pao* 37 (1944): 153–64.
- Pelliot, Paul. *L'Haute Asie*. Paris: Goudard, 1937.
- Pelliot, Paul. *Les Mongols et la Papauté*. Paris: Picard, 1923.
- Petrukhin, Vladimir. "Khazaria and Rus': An Examination of their Historical Relations." In *The world of the Khazars New Perspectives*, 245–68. Leiden: Brill, 2007.
- Pfeiffer, Judith. *Conversion to Islam among the Ilkhans in Muslim Narrative Traditions: The Case of Aḥmad Tegüder*. Ph.D. diss. University of Chicago, 2003.
- Pistarino, Geo. *I Gin dell'Oltremare*. Genova: Civico Istituto Colombiano, 1988.
- Pletnëva, Svetlana A. "Pechenegi, torki i polovcy v juzhnorusskikh stepjach. Trudy Volgo-Donskoj archeologičeskoj ekspedicii." *Materialy i Issledovanija po Archeologii SSSR* 62 (1958): 151–226.
- Pletnëva, Svetlana A. *Polovcy*. Moskva: Nauka, 1971.
- Pletnëva, Svetlana, A. *Poloveckaja zemlja, Drevenerusskie knjazhestva X–XIII vv.* Moskva, 1975.
- Pohl, Walter. *Le origini etniche dell'Europa. Barbari e Romani tra antichità e medioevo*. Roma: Viella, 2000.

- Poly, Jean Pierre, and Eric Bournazel. (Eds). *Les féodalités. Histoire générale des systèmes politiques*. Paris: Presse Universitaire, 1998.
- Ponomarëv, Valerij N. "Kumany-Polovcy." *Vestnik Drevnej Istorii* 3–4 (1940): 366–70.
- Priselkov, Michajl D. "Russko-vizantijskie otnoshenija IX–XIIvv." *Vestnik drevnej istorii* 3 (1939): 98–109.
- Pritsak, Omeljan "The Turcophone peoples in the Area of the Caucasus from the VI to the XI Century." *Il Caucaso: cerniera fra culture dal Mediterraneo alla Persia (secoli IV–XI)*. 2 vols., 223–45. Spoleto: Centro Italiano di Studi sull'alto medioevo, 1996.
- Pritsak, Omeljan. "The Polovcians and Rus." *Archivum Eurasiae medii aevi* 2 (1982): 321–380.
- Pritsak, Omeljan. *The origin of Rus'*. Cambridge: Distributed by Harvard University Press for the Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, 1981.
- Pritula, Anton. "A Hymn on Tiflis from Warda Collection: A Transformation of the Muslim Conquerors into Pagans." In *Caucasus during the Mongol Period. Der Kaukasus in der Mongolenzeit*. Ed. Jurgen Tubach, Sophie G. Vashalomidze and Manfred Zimmer, 217–38. Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2013.
- Pubblici, Lorenzo. "Antagonism and Coexistence. Local Population and Western Merchants On Venetian Azov See in the 14th century." In *Russia, Oriente slavo e Occidente europeo. Fratture e integrazioni nella storia e nella civiltà letteraria*. Ed. Claudia Pieralli, 25–47. Firenze: Firenze University press.
- Pubblici, Lorenzo. "Giovanni di Plano Carpini and the Representation of Otherness in the First Part of the Historia Mongalorum." *Золотоордынская цивилизация* (Golden Horde Civilization) 10 (2017): 38–49.
- Pubblici, Lorenzo. "Rus'/Russia and the Mongols: Some Remarks on the Historical Meaning and the Present Debate of the Mongol-Tatar yoke." *Eurasian Studies* 18, no. 2 (2021): 299–319.
- Pubblici, Lorenzo. "Experiencing Alterity: Italian Merchants and Local Population in 14th Century Venetian Azov Sea. Changes and Continuity." In *8th International Conference on Medieval History of the Eurasian Steppe Nomads and their Neighbors in the Middle Ages, held in Sofia, November 20–23, 2020*, *Chronica* (forthcoming).
- Pubblici, Lorenzo. "Il fattore nomade e l'organizzazione politica armena. Il caso della fiscalità durante il khanato di Möngke: 1252–1259." *Bazmavep* 3–4 (2010): 533–50.
- Pubblici, Lorenzo. "Some Remarks on the Slave Trade in the Heart of the Golden Horde (14th century) in the Wake of C. Verlinden's Research". *Golden Horde Review*. 5.3 (2017): 566–76.
- Pubblici, Lorenzo. "Srednij mir: l'Eurasismo e la riflessione storica di Nicola Ottokar." *Annali. Sezione Orientale* 81 (2021): 99–122.
- Pubblici, Lorenzo. "Western immigration in the fourteenth-century golden horde: The case of Venetian Tana." *Golden Horde Review* 9.1 (2021): 90–107.

- Publici, Lorenzo. "Venezia e il mar d'Azov. Alcune considerazioni su Tana nel XIV secolo." *Archivio Storico Italiano* CLXIII.3 (2005): 435–84.
- Queller, Donald E., e Thomas F. Madden, a cura di. 1999. *The Fourth Crusade: The Conquest of Constantinople*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Queller, Donald Edward. *Medieval diplomacy and the Fourth Crusade*. London: Variorum Reprints, 1980.
- Rapp, Stephen H. *Studies In Medieval Georgian Historiography: Early Texts And Eurasian Contexts*. Leuven: Peeters, 2003.
- Rásonyi, Lázló. "Contributions à l'histoire des premières cristallisations d'Etat des Roumanis," *Archivum Europae Centro Orientalis* I (1935): 221–53.
- Rasovskij, Dmitrij A. "Pecheneghi, torki i berendei na Rusi i v Ugri." *Annaly Instituta im. N.P. Kondakova* V (1933): 9–18.
- Rasovskij, Dmitrij A. "Polovcy." *Annaly Instituta im. N.P. Kondakova* VII (1935): 161–82.
- Rasovskij, Dmitrij A. "Voennaja istorija polovcev." *Annaly Instituta im. N.P. Kondakova* XI (1940): 95–127.
- Rasovskij, Dmitrij. "Rol' Polovcev v vojnax Asenej s vizantijskoj i latinskoj imperijami v 1186–1207gg." *Spisanie na B'lgarskaja Akademija na naukite* 58 (1939): 203–11.
- Ratchnevsky, Paul. *Genghis Khan: His Life and Legacy*. Trans. Thomas Nivison Haining. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991.
- Richard, Jean. "Ultimatums mongols et lettres apocryphes: l'Occident et les motifs de guerre des Tartares." *Central Asiatic Journal* 17: 212–222.
- Richard, Jean. "Le Christianisme dans l'Asie Centrale." *Journal of Asian History* 16.2 (1982): 101–24.
- Richard, Jean. *La papauté et les missions d'Orient au Moyen Âge (XIII^e–XV^e siècles)*. Roma: École Française de Rome, 1998.
- Risaliti, Renato. "A proposito del dibattito russo sui modelli di civiltà." *Religioni e società* XXXIV (1999): 98–104.
- Risaliti, Renato. *Storia problematica della Russia*. Toscana Nuova (Firenze), 2002.
- Rossabi, Morris. *The Mongols: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- Roux, Jean-Paul. "Les astres chez les Turcs et les Mongols." *Revue de l'histoire des religions* CXC (1979): 153–92.
- Roux, Jean-Paul. *Genghis Khan and the Mongol Empire*. London: Thames & Hudson, 2000.
- Roux, Jean-Paul. *La mort chez les peuples altaïques anciens et médiévaux*. Paris: Maisonneuve, 1963.
- Rybakov, Boris A. *Istorija Kul'tury Drevnej Rusi. Domongol'skij period*, 2 voll. Moskva-Leningrad, 1948.
- Sagaster, Klaus. "Herrschaftsideologie und Fiedensgedanke bei den Mongolen." *Central Asian Journal* 17: 223–42.

- Şahin, İlhan. "The Oghuz Turks of Anatolia." *Osmanlı Döneminde Konar-Göçerler, Nomads in the Ottoman Empire* (2016): 55–84.
- Saunders, John H. *The History of the Mongol Conquests*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001.
- Scholz, Fred. *Nomadismus. Theorie und Wandel einer sozio-ökologischen Kulturweise*. Stuttgart: Steiner, 1995.
- Settia, Armando A. *Rapine, assedi, battaglie. La guerra nel Medioevo*. Roma-Bari: Laterza, 2002.
- Shukurov, Rustam M. "Trebizond and the Seljuks (1204–1299)." *Mésogeios*, Ed. G. Ľeiser, 73–138. 25–26 (2005).
- Shukurov, Rustam. "The oriental margins of the Byzantine world: a prosopographical perspective." *Identities and Allegiances in the Eastern Mediterranean after 1204* (2011): 167–196.
- Sinclair, Thomas. *Eastern Trade and the Mediterranean in the Middle Ages: Pegolotti's Ayas-Tabriz Itinerary and its Commercial Context*. Routledge, 2019.
- Sinor, Denis. "The Mongols in the West" *Journal of Asian History* 33–1 (1999): 1–44.
- Skrzhinskaja, Elena Č. *Rus', Italija i Vizantija v Srednevekov'e*. Sankt Peterburg: Aleteja, 2000.
- Skržinskaja, Elena. "Storia della Tana." *Studi Veneziani* x (1968): 3–47.
- Sobolevskij, Aleksej I. *Materialy I issledovanija v oblasti slavyjanskoj filologii I archeologii*. Sankt Peterburg: Tip. Imp. Akad. Nauk, 1910.
- Sokolov, N.P. *A proposito del significato di "he Rosia" in alcuni documenti bizantini dei secoli XII e XIII*, «Storici sovietici del Levante genovese», a cura di A. Prefumo, Genova, 1985, pp. 89–97.
- Spinei, Victor. *The Romanians and the Turkic Nomads North of the Danube Delta from the Tenth to the Mid-Thirteenth Century*. Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2009.
- Spuler, Bertold. *Die Goldene Horde. Die Mongolen in Russland: 1223–1502*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1965.
- Stender-Petersen, Adolph. "The Igor Tale." *WORD* 4. 3 (1948): 143–154.
- Stepanov, Tsvetelin. *The Bulgars and the Steppe Empire in the Early Middle Ages: The Problem of the Others*. Leiden: Brill, 2010.
- Sullivan, Richard E. "Khan Boris and the Conversion of Bulgaria: A Case Study of the Impact of Christianity on a Barbarian Society." *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History* 3 (1966): 55–139.
- Suny, Ronald Grigor. *The making of the Georgian Nation*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994.
- Sverdlov, Michail B. *Domongol'skaja Rus': knjaz' i knjažeskaja vlast' na Rusi VI–pervoj treti XIII vv.* Sankt-Peterburg: Akad. Proekt, 2003.
- Thiriet, Freddy. *La Romanie venitienne au moyen age: le developpement et l'exploitation du domaine colonial venitien (12–15. siecles)*. Paris: Boccard, 1959.

- Thomson, Robert W. "The Crusaders Through Armenian Eyes." *The Crusades from the Perspective of Byzantium and the Muslim World* (2001): 71–82.
- Tishin, Vladimir V. and Bair Z. Nanzatov. "Tatary vnutrennej Azii VIII–XII vv.: nekotorye voprosy istoricheskoi geografii" *Zolotoordynskoe obozrenie* 8.1 (2020): 8–31.
- Tisserant, Eugène. "Une lettre de l'Ilkhan de Perse Abaga, adressee en 1268 au pape Clement IV" *Le Muséon* 59: 547–556.
- Todorov, Boris. "The Value of Empire: Tenth-century Bulgaria between Magyars, Pechenegs and Byzantium." *Journal of Medieval History* 36.4 (2010): 312–26.
- Tolochko, Petr P. *Kochevye narody stepei i kievskaja Rus'*. Sankt Peterburg: Aleteja, 2003.
- Tosi, Maurizio. "Dalla tribù all'impero. Riflessioni sul Caucaso, le steppe e I meccanismi dell'evoluzione sociale alla luce dei dati archeologici." In *Il Caucaso: cerniera fra culture dal Mediterraneo alla Persia (secoli IV–XI)*. 2 vols., 246–70. Spoleto: Centro Italiano di Studi sull'alto medioevo, 1996.
- Toumanoff, Cyril. "Caucasia and Byzantium." *Traditio* 27 (1971): 111–158.
- Toumanoff, Cyril. "On the Relationship between the Founder of the Empire of Trebizond and the Georgian Queen Thamar." *Speculum* 15, no. 3 (1940): 299–312.
- Toumanoff, Cyril. "The Bagratids of Iberia from the Eighth to the Eleventh Century" *Le Muséon* 74 (1961): 5–42.
- Toumanoff, Cyril. *Studies in Christian Caucasian History*. Georgetown University Press, 1963.
- Treadgold, Warren T. *A History of the Byzantine State and Society*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997.
- Tubach, Jurgen, Sophie Vashalomidze, and Manfred Zimmer. *Caucasus During the Mongol Period – Der Kaukasus in der Mongolenzeit*. Wiesbaden: Reichert. Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2013.
- Udal'cova, Zinaidova V., R.A. Nasledova, Boris L. Fonkič and A.V. Bank, *XV Mezhdunarodnij kongress vizantinistov v Afinach*. Athens, 1976.
- Uspenskij, Fëdor I. "Vydelenie Trapezunta iz sostava Vizantijskoj imperii." *Seminarium Kondakovianum* 1 (1927): 21–34.
- Uspenskij, Fëdor I. *Istorija Vizantijskoj imperii*. Moskva [etc.]: Izd. Akademii nauk SSSR, 1948.
- Vasary, István. *Cumans and Tatars: Oriental Military in the Pre-Ottoman Balkans, 1185–1365*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- Vashalomidze, Sophia. "Mongol Invasions in the Caucasus and the Georgian Source Kartlis Exovreba." In *Caucasus During the Mongol Period. Der Kaukasus in der Mongolenzeit*. Ed. Jurgen Tubach, Sophie G. Vashalomidze and Manfred Zimmer, 309–20. Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2013.
- Vasiliev, Alexander Alexandrovich. "The Foundation of the Empire of Trebizond (1204–1222)." *Speculum* 11, no. 1 (1936): 3–37.
- Verlinden, Charles. 1977. *L'esclavage dans l'Europe médiévale*. Gent: Rijksuniversiteit.

- Vernadsky, George. "Relations bizantino-russes au XII^e siècles." *Byzantion* 4 (1927–28): 269–76.
- Vernadsky, George. "The Scope and Content of Chingis Qan's Yasa." *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 3 (1938): 337–60.
- Vernadsky, George. "Zolotaja Orda, Egipet i Vizantija v ich vzaimootnoshenijach v carstvovanie Michaila Paleologa." *Seminarium Kondakovianum* 1 (1927): 73–84.
- Vernadsky, George. *Kievan Russia*. New Heaven: Yale University Press, 1973.
- Vernadsky, George. *Political and Diplomatic History of Russia*. London: Williams and Norgate, 1937.
- Vernadsky, George. *The Mongols and Russia*. New Heaven: Yale University Press, 1959.
- Vladimirtsov, Boris, Ja. *The Life of Chingis-Khan*. Trans. Prince D.S. Mirsky. London: Routledge and Sons, 1930.
- Voegelin, Eric. "The Mongol Orders of Submission to European Powers 1245–1255" *Byzantion* 15: 378–413.
- Vogel, Hans Ulrich. *Marco Polo was in China: New Evidence from Currencies, Salts and Revenues*. Leiden: Brill, 2013.
- Vryonis, Speros. *The Decline of Medieval Hellenism in Asia Minor and the Process of Islamization from the Eleventh Through the Fifteenth Century*. University of California Press, 1971.
- Vryonis, Speros. *Studies on Byzantium, Seljuks, and Ottomans*. Udena, 1981.
- Waida, Manabu. "Central Asian Mythology of the Origins of Death." *Antropos* LXXVII (1982): 663–702.
- Waida, Manabu. "Myths of the Origin of Death: The Central Asian Type." *Temenos* XVIII (1982): 87–98.
- Wasserstein, David. "The Khazars and the World of Islam." In *The World of the Khazars New Perspectives*, 373–86. Leiden: Brill, 2007.
- Weatherford, Jack. *Genghis Khan and the Making of the Modern World*. New York: Three River Press, 2005.
- Wickens, George M. "Nasir ad-Din Tusi on the Fall of Baghdad: a Further Study." *Journal of Semitic Studies* 7 (1962): 23–35.
- Widengren, Geo. *Les Religions de l'Iran*. Paris, 1968.
- Wolff, Robert L. "The 'Second Bulgarian Empire'. Its Origin and History to 1204." In *The Expansion of Orthodox Europe, Byzantium, the Balkans and Russia*, ed. Jonathan Shepard, 267–306. London: Routledge, 2007.
- Yildiz, Sara Nur. "Baiju: The Mongol Conqueror at the Crossfire of Dynastic Struggle." In *Along the Silk Roads in Mongol Eurasia. Generals, Merchants, and Intellectuals*. Ed. Jonathan Brack, Michale Biran, and Francesca Fiaschetti, 44–63. Oakland: University of California Press, 2020.
- Zaliznjak, Andrej A. "Slovo o polku Igoreve": vzgljad lingvista. Moskva: Rukopisnye Pamjatniki Drevnej Rusi, 2008.
- Zhivkov, Boris. *Khazaria in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries*. Leiden: Brill, 2015.

Index

- ʿAyn Jālūt 161, 175, 194 n. 41
Abaqa 196
Abasadzor 200 n. 65
Abasgia, *See* Abkhazia
Abbasid Caliphate 80, 136, 160–161, 163, 171, 172 n. 65, 173, 175 n. 75, 193, 194 n. 41, 213
Abbasids 172
Abhkazs 7 n. 3, 9, 24, 30, 141
Abkhazia 6, 9, 11, 20
Abkhazia, Kingdom of 9
Abkhazian dynasty 9
Abkhazian princes 9
Abu-Bakr, Emir 23 n. 57
Abu'l Feda 195
Abu Said 182, 219
Achaemenian Empire 8
Achilles Sanctuary 61 n. 1
Adriatic coast 2
Adriatic Sea 149
Adygea 61
Adyghe 61
Aegean Islands 25
Afghanistan 133–134
Aghbugha 203 n. 79
Ahlat 136
Ahmad Sultan. *See* Tagüder
Akanay 205
Akhlāt 143 n. 102
Akner. *See* Grigor of Akner
Aktyubinsk 34
Al'tyana (Elt'ina) Khatun 202 n. 77
Ala ad-Din Kai-Qubad Seljuk Sultan 143
al-Achraf, Ayyubid Sultan 143
Alamut 172, 195
Alans 138, 141, 147, 204
Albania 9, 34 n. 2, 67
Albanians 65–66
Alči Tatar 82 n. 33
Aleppo 81 n. 21, 165, 174, 183, 195
Alexander the Great 79
Alexandria 119
Alexiad 44, 49
Alexios I Komnenos 23, 27, 50, 52, 79
Alexios III Angelos 16, 19, 24, 27
Alexios I of Trebizond 28
Alghan 208
al-Makrizi 216
Almaligh 127 n. 21
al-Musta'sim b'illah, Caliph 172–173
al-Qalqashandi 208 n. 108
Altai Mountains 80
altamgha (red seal) 202 n. 77
Amastris 28 n. 75
Ambaqai-qagan 88
Amid. *See* Diyarbakir
Amu-Darya 174
Anagurak *noyon* 204
Anatolia. *See* Asia Minor
Anberd 203
Ancouria 24
anda 87–88, 112, 188
Andrey Bogolyubsky 73
Andrej of Chernigov 186 n. 3
Andronikos Komnenos 26
Ani 6, 8, 14, 21, 27, 141, 144, 159, 193, 203, 221
Ankara 25
Anna Komnene 37, 44, 47 n. 47, 49–50
an-Nasir li-Din-Allah 128
Antioch 27, 32, 174
Apatouron 61 n. 1
Arabic Peninsula 193
Arabs 8–9, 11 n. 14, 47 n. 48
Arasse 140 n. 93
Araxes 144
arban 102–103
Arcadiopolis 24
Ardabil 133
Arghun 165, 167, 186, 197, 205–206
Arghun Aqa 165 n. 40, 167 n. 49, 168, 171, 198 n. 59, 204–205, 218
Arigh Böke 163
Armenia ix, 1–2, 7–10, 12–14, 24, 64, 67–69, 72, 141, 144, 159, 164, 193, 202, 221
Armenia, Kingdom of 6, 10, 12
Armenian aristocracy 14
Armenians 70, 141
Armenia, Viceroy of 10
Árpád dynasty 47
Arqai-Qasar 101
Arran 170

- Artsruni 10–13
 Aruestagets 168
 As. *See* Alans
 Asen II, John (Ivan) ii, 26
 Ashawan 200
 Ashot II 10
 Asia ix, xii, 1, 4, 6, 64, 75, 79, 84, 119, 157, 175, 223–224
 Asia Minor ix, 14, 23, 27, 30, 33, 64, 69, 72, 145, 163, 182
 Ašig 103 n. 134
 Assassins 171–173, 195
 Astrakhan 138
Atabeg 139
 Athos, Mount 13, 27
 Äträk 69–70, 72
Autokrator 53 n. 80
 Avars 141 n. 100
 Avesta 197 n. 54
 Awag 202 n. 77, 203 n. 79
 Awfi 191
 Ayas 30
ayil 89, 92–94, 98
 Ay-opa 73 n. 41
 Ayrarat 14
 Ayrivank' 203
 Ayyubids 142 n. 101, 165
 Azat, river 140 n. 93
 Azerbaijan 12, 14, 21, 23 n. 57, 33, 71, 136, 139–140, 144, 164–165, 167, 170, 193, 202, 220
 Azerbaijani 71
äzhän 87
aznaurni 67
 Azov basin 36, 184, 187, 194, 212
 Azov Sea 1, 16–17, 19, 28, 32, 36, 46, 61–62, 64, 84, 120, 122, 135, 139, 151, 181

 Baarin 92 n. 95
 Badai 117 n. 193
 Baghdad 80, 128, 136, 142, 155, 160–161, 171–173, 175, 183, 194–195, 198–199, 204, 208
 Bagratid 12
 Bagratid dynasty 10, 73 n. 41
 Bagratids 6, 10–11, 20, 26, 33, 68
 Bagrat III of Georgia 6, 68
 Bagrat IV of Georgia 23
 Bahavi, Ottoman juror and author 40 n. 24
 Baidu 197
 Baihaq 220
 Baiju 145–146, 166, 170, 172, 202–203, 218
 Baikal, lake 77, 81
 Bakaul 179
 Baldwin I of Flanders 19, 32
 Balin 21 n. 53
 Balkans 16, 23–25, 32, 118, 182
 Balkh 131, 133
 Balkhash, lake 127 n. 21
 Baltic provinces 62
 Baltic region 33, 64
 Baltic Sea 16, 56, 179 n. 86
 Barda 218
 Bar Hebraeus 80 n. 21
basileia 18
 Basil II 46 n. 42, 62
 Basil II, Byzantine Emperor 6
Basraq 135, 177, 179–180
 Batchman 147–148
 Batu 144, 147–149, 152, 159–162, 166, 176–177, 179, 181–183, 186, 204–205, 207–208, 215
 Batumi 32, 69, 72
 Bayburt 14
 Baylakan 218
 Beijing 124
 Beirut 119
beki 116, 154, 190
 Bela IV 146–147, 149
 Belgean Mountain 105, *See* Burqan Qaldun, 79
 Belgütei 93 n. 96
 Beloozero 216
 Benedict the Pole 38
 Berendei 58–59
 Berestovo 56
 Berke 161 n. 29, 163, 175, 195, 208–209
 Besüd 113 n. 175
 Bigār 85
biki. See beki
 Bithynia 24
 Bjni 200, 203
 Black Cumania 70
 Black Plague 4
 Black Sea 1–2, 6, 8, 16–17, 20, 23, 26–28, 32–34, 36, 47, 54, 61, 79, 118–119, 143–144, 159, 163, 182, 184, 213

- Black Sea basin 19
 Black Sea coast 1
 Blue Horde 83
bogol 94, 97, 114–117
 Bohemond of Antioch 174
 Bohemond VI 174, 195
 Bolgar 215
 Boniak 51
 Bonyak. *See* Boniak
 Borizigin clan 115 n. 184
 Börte 89
 Bosphorus 16, 19, 47, 64
 Buddhism 187, 191–192, 196–197, 205–206, 209
 Bug, river 2
 Bugha 165, 204
 Bughurij 103
bukaul 179
 Bukhara 4, 106, 107 n. 160, 125 n. 13, 128–129, 144, 213
 Bulgaria, Kingdom of 45
 Bulgarians 19, 24, 208 n. 108
 Burqan Qaldun 79
 Buyur, lake 85 n. 45
 Byzantine. *See* Byzantine Empire
 Byzantine Empire ix, 2, 6–12, 16–19, 23, 25–26, 28, 33, 47, 53, 64–65, 122, 175 n. 75, 179 n. 86, 182, 208 n. 108
 Byzantine exarch 9
 Byzantine politics 2
 Byzantines 46–48, 52
 Byzantium. *See* Byzantine Empire

 Caesarea 14, 170, 202
 Caffa 28, 30, 157, 181, 183
 Cairo 119
 Cakheti 24
 Caliph 155, 172, 194
 Caliphate. *See* Abbasid Caliphate
 Caliphate of Baghdad. *See* Abbasid Caliphate
 Calonero 24
camunoca. *See* *tamgha*
 Cappadocia 12, 24
 Carolingians 110
 Carpathians 47, 146
 Caspian Caucasias 1
 Caspian Sea 1–2, 6, 23, 34, 36, 45, 122, 131, 133, 136 n. 72, 138, 140, 143, 159, 168, 172, 183, 213

 Catalans 213
Catholicos 203–204
 Caucasias ix, 1–2, 4, 6, 8, 12–13, 18–19, 26, 36, 45, 80, 104, 112, 135–136, 139–140, 142–143, 145–146, 152, 159–160, 162–165, 167 n. 49, 168, 170, 174–176, 182–184, 187, 193, 195, 200, 202–206, 210 n. 115, 212–214, 217–219, 221–223, 226
 Caucasian passes 9
 Caucasian steppes 37, 42, 45–46
 Caucasias ix, xii, 1, 2–4, 6, 8–9, 11, 13–14, 20, 24–25, 27, 30, 32, 34 n. 2, 36–37, 47–49, 51–52, 54, 61–62, 64–66, 68–71, 73, 76, 80–81, 84, 118–120, 122, 135, 138–139, 142, 144, 146, 151, 160, 164, 187, 218, 222
 Celts 51 n. 71
 Central Asia 2, 28, 62, 64, 91, 107 n. 160, 182, 187, 214, 221–224
 Central Europe 221
 Cerasont 28 n. 75
čerbi 100–101
 Chagadai 128, 134, 144, 182
 Chagadaids 208
 Chagadaid ulus 185
 Chagataid party 159
 Chalwa 24
 Chanet 141
 Ch'araberd 205
 Chehrkent 128
 Chernigov 186 n. 3
 Chernye Klobuki 58–59
 Cherson 61 n. 2
 China 75, 77, 80, 94, 106, 122, 124–125, 127 n. 21, 143, 145, 156–158, 170, 187, 208–210, 222–225
 Chinggisids 60, 69, 79, 81, 121
 Chinggis Khan ix, x, 5, 33, 80, 82–85, 88 n. 69, 74, 89, 91, 93–94, 98–99, 101, 103–106, 108 n. 162, 109, 112, 116–117, 119–122, 124–128, 130, 134–135, 143, 147 n. 118, 151, 155, 160, 162, 170, 173, 176, 180, 182, 185, 187–188, 192–193
 Chios 25 n. 66
 Chong Qing 143
 Choniates Niketas 37, 52, 53 n. 79, 108 n. 161
 Chormaghun 144–145, 155, 159, 170, 202, 218
 Chosroids 10
Chozhdenie za tri morja 210

- Christianity 33, 67, 109, 111, 138, 187, 188, 195, 200, 201–202, 205–210
 Cilicia 12, 23, 81 n. 21, 144, 166–167, 193, 204–205, 218
 Cimmerian Bosphorus 46, 61
 Circassians 30, 138
 Clement IV Pope 196
 Clement V Pope 36 n. 9
 Colchis 8
 Coloman 52
 Confucianism 209
 Constantine IX 13
 Constantine VIII, Porphyrogenitus vii, 35
 Constantinople 4, 16–19, 23, 25, 27–28, 64, 143, 223–224
 Cossacks 5
 Crimea 16–17, 28, 32, 60, 157, 181–183, 214–215, 223
 Croats 19
 Cuman. *See* Qipchaqs
 Čürkin 82 n. 33
 Cyprus 27
 Cythora 28 n. 75

 Dabil 218
 Dabusiya 129–130
 Dadjigs. *See* Arabs
 Daghestan 141 n. 100
 Dalan Nemürges 82 n. 33
 Damascus 119, 165, 174, 183, 195, 204
 Damghan 133
 Damietta 136
 Danijl of Galich 179
 Danube 2, 7, 34, 36, 40, 45, 47, 49, 53 n. 80, 54, 149, 182, 208 n. 108
 Darial 9
daruga/darugachi 135, 177, 179
 Dasht-i Qipchaq 36, 38, 44
 David II 23
 David III 20 n. 46
 David IV 20 n. 46
 David IV of Georgia 20–21, 69–70, 72, 160
 David Komnenos 30
 David Narin 160, 166, 171
 David Soslan 25 n. 65
 David Ulu 160, 166, 171
De adventu Tartarorum 105
 Degai 100
 Delhi 139
 Delhi, Sultan of 139
 Demetrius I 72–73
 Derbend 9, 136, 138, 140, 168, 208, 218
 Diyarbakir 144
 Djezireh 136
 Dnepr 2, 34, 40, 45, 53–56, 139, 146, 213
 Dniestr 2, 146
 Dobruja 151, 182
 Dobun Mergen 112 n. 175
 Dodai-čerbi 100
 Don 2, 6–7, 34, 40, 46, 56, 59, 70, 139, 213, 223–224
 Don basin 216
 Donets 40, 70–71
 Dristra 49–50
 Dukas, Byzantine dynasty 26
 Dvin 21, 23 n. 57, 141

 East Asia 80, 83, 91, 215, 221
 Eastern Europe ix, 79, 148, 181
 Eastern European steppe 59
 Eastern Roman Empire. *See* Byzantine Empire
 Edward I of England 196
 Egrisi 8
 Egypt 118 n. 196, 119, 136, 157, 161, 173–174, 196, 208 n. 105, 216, 219
 Eldiguzids 139
 Empire of Trebizond. *See* Trebizond, Empire of
 Encyclica contra Tartaros 105
 Epirus, Principality of 26
eristavni 68
 Erzincan. *See* Erzindjan
 Erzindjan 143, 145, 202
 Erzurum 24, 145, 159, 170, 193, 217 n. 10
 Estonia, Duchy of 33
 Etil 46
 Eurasia 4, 83, 155, 226
 Eurasianism 84
 Eurasianist movement. *See* Eurasianism
 Europe x, 1–4, 6, 34, 38 n. 14, 64, 77, 84, 99, 119, 149, 151, 181, 223

 Far East 3, 6, 30, 32
 Fārāb 42 n. 26
 Farsakh 128

- Faxium. *See* Lo Vati
feudalism 44, 95
 Finland, Duchy of 33
 Fourth Crusade ix, 2, 16–20, 25, 28, 32–33, 37 n. 13, 53, 64, 79, 122
 France 197
 Francesco di Balduccio Pegolotti 168 n. 53
 Franks 19
 Frederick I Barbarossa 23
 Frederick II 105
- Gaardariki 60
 Galatea 24
 Galich 148
 Gandzak 21, 154, 200
 Gandzasar 202
 Ganja. *See* Gandzak
 Gardens 61 n. 1
 Garni 204
 Garni, river 140 n. 93
 Garni valley 140
 Gaza 174
 Geikhatu 197
 Genoa 16, 19, 25 n. 66, 30, 32, 64, 118, 175 n. 75, 181, 209, 213, 223
 George III of Georgia 20 n. 48, 21, 26, 30, 72, 200 n. 65
 George IV of Georgia 30, 136, 166, 171
 Georgia ix, 1–2, 6–9, 11–14, 17, 20–21, 23–28, 30, 65–66, 68–70, 72–73, 136, 140–142, 145, 154, 159, 161 n. 29, 164, 167, 170, 193, 202, 213, 218, 221
 Georgia, Kingdom of 3, 11, 20–21, 24, 27, 32–33, 65, 68–69, 73, 80, 139, 143, 217
 Georgian Church 112
 Georgian nobility 10, 12
 Georgian society 66–67
 Germany 38
 Getik 154 n. 7, 203
 Ghazan 4, 170, 176, 186, 193, 196–199, 205, 219, 221
 Ghaznavids 40 n. 23
 Ghazni 133–135
 Ghuz. *See* Oghuz
 Giresun. *See* Cerasont
 Gobi Desert 80, 82
 Golden Horde. *See* Ulus *Jochi* 182, 209, 219
 Gorgippie 61 n. 1
- Gothia 17
 Gran Khanate 162
 Great Armenia. *See* Greater Armenia
 Greater Armenia 14, 20, 144, 159, 164, 167, 170, 204, 218
 Greater Sea. *See* Black Sea
 Great Khan 162–163, 165
 Great Sea. *See* Black Sea
 Great Wall 77, 124
 Greece 26
 Greeks 28
 Grigor Arknerts'i 79 n. 16, 186
 Grigor of Akner. *See* Grigor Arknerts'i
 Grigor Xach'enets'i 202, 203 n. 79
 Guaramids 10
 Güčügür 100
 Guristan. *See* Georgia 170
 Guyuk. *See* Güyük
 Güyük 159–161, 165–166, 187, 194, 203–204
gwari 66–67, 114–115
- Habigu's-Siyar 198
 Haghartsin 203
 Haghbat 203
 Hamadan 136, 219–220
 Hasan, Prince of Kachetia 205
 Hawuts' 203
 Hayton of Gorichos 36, 79, 196
 Helena Argyre 23
 Hellenistic culture 61
 Henry II Grand Duke of Silesia 148
 Henry of Flanders 32
 Heraclea 28 n. 75
 Heraclius I 8
 Herat 219, 221
 Hereth 24
 Hermonassa 61 n. 1
 Herodotus 107 n. 161
 Hethum I 144–145, 164, 166, 174, 195
 High Tao. *See* Tayk'
 Historia Mongalorum 99–100, 105, 185
 Historia Tartarorum 105
 History of the Nation of Archers 77
 Höelün Khatun 85 n. 45, 88, 113 n. 175
 Holy Land 30
 Hordu 149
 Hülegü 161–163, 170–176, 183, 186–187, 194–196, 203, 206, 208

- Hungarian Kingdom. *See* Hungary
 Hungarians 52, 145
 Hungary 56, 64, 146, 148–149, 181, 207, 214
 Huns 65
- Iberia 8–11, 13, 28, 61, 65, 67
 Iberians 66
 Iberia, Viceroy of 10
 Ibn al-Athir 126, 130 n. 43, 138, 141 n. 96, 154
 Ibn Battuta 158
 Ibn Muhammad al- 157
 Iconium. *See* Konya 30
 Iconium Sultanate of 30
 Igor of Kiev 54
 Igor Svyatoslavich 55 n. 91
 Ikhtijar ed-Din Kechki 128
 Ilamish Plain, battle of 81
 Ilkhanate 4, 28, 75, 118, 156–157, 159, 161–163, 168, 170, 173, 175–176, 182–183, 185, 188, 193, 195, 197, 199, 205–206, 208–210, 213, 217–219, 222, 225
 Iltutmish, Sultan of Delhi 139
 Imereti 9, 28, 160
 Inal-Khan 128
 India 2, 198
 Inžä 117
 Ipat'evskaya Letopis'. *See* Hypatian Chronicle
 Iran 131, 133, 139, 162, 202
 Iranians 165
 Iraq 133, 141, 217
 Irgän 89, 92
 Iris, river 30
 Irtysh 40, 127, 135
 Isaac II Angelos 16, 24, 27
 Isauro 24
 Isfahan 199
 Isfara'in 220
 Islam ix, 4, 40, 80, 136, 163, 173, 186, 188, 193–195, 197, 205–206, 208, 210, 218
 Islamic Empire 8
 Ismaelites 171
 Issik-Kul 144
 Issyk-Kul 80
 Italians 60
 Italy 197, 226
 Itil 144
Itinerarium 105, 185
 Ivane 141, 201
- Ivan IV, Tsar 5, iv
 Iwane of Akhal-Tzikhé 24
 Izjaslav Mstislavich 58, 73
 Izz ad-Din 30
- Jacobites 195–196
 Jaghatai. *See* Juvain
 Jaghun 103
 Jalal ud-Din, Khorazm-Shah 21, 124, 133–135, 139–144, 164, 200
 Jamal ad-Din 194 n. 40
 Jambul 165
 Jarčut 114
 Jarlygh 180, 182
 Jarlyk 152
 Jaroslav' 148, 216
 Jarovslavl 179
 Jebe ix, 130–131, 133, 135–136, 138, 145 n. 111
 Jerusalem 174
 Jerusalem, Kingdom of 174
 Jeshil Yrmak 30
 Jin dynasty 122
 Jin Empire 124
 Jochi 121, 128, 144, 149, 159, 176, 180
 Jochids 162
 Jochid ulus. *See* Ulus Jochi
 Johannes Tzetze. *See* Tzetze, Johannes
 John Kinnamos. *See* Kinnamos, John 37
 John of Wallachia. *See* Kalojan
 John Plano Carpini. *See* Plano Carpini, John
 John Skylitzes 46 n. 42
 John Smbat III 12
 Judaism 45, 206
 Jurchen 122
 Jur'ev 56
 Jurij Dolgorukij 73 n. 41
 Jurij II Vsevolodovich of Suzdal' 148
 Justinian I 12, 61
 Juvain 133
 Juvaini, Ata Malik 75, 85, 102–103, 106, 125–127, 129–131, 135, 143, 154, 176, 185, 189, 217
 Juzjani 124 n. 8, 130 n. 43
- Kachetia 205
 Kachezia 201
 Kai-Khosrau II, Sultan of Rum ii, 145
 Kalets 138

- Kalka River 138
 Kálmán. *See* Coloman
 Kalojan 59 n. 104
 Kan-Sou 80
 Karakorum 25 n. 65, 143, 162, 165–166
 Karatzas 51
 Karin 203
 Karkarhn 205
 Karkh 172
 Kars 14, 21, 141, 144, 159, 193, 203, 221
 Kars, Kingdom of 13
 Kars, principality of 10
 Kartli 8–9, 24, 71, 160
 Kartveli people 8
 Kāshghar 158
 Kashmir 198
 Kassī. *See* Rus'
 Kayean 204
 Kaykavus II 160
 Kay Khusraw I 25
 Kazakhstan 34, 77, 127 n. 21, 128, 165
 Kehtewuts 101
 Ked-Bugha 161, 172, 175, 195
 Keler. *See* Hungarians
 Kerait 88
 Keraites 92 n. 94, 116, 192
 Kerch Strait 61–62, 64–65, 224
 Kerch'arhun 203
 Kereyids 206 n. 93
 Kerman 141
 Kerulen, river 82, 144
keshig 101, 145 n. 111
 Khagaria 80
 Khan 113
 Khazar Empire. *See* Khazar Kaganate
 Khazaria 7
 Khazar Khaganate 7, 9, 11, 45, 46, 54
 Khazars 19, 45, 46 n. 42, 62
 Kheraites 81, 94, 98, 101, 116–117
 Kherson 65
 Khilat 142, 203
 Khitai 76
 Khlati. *See* Ahlat
 Khorasan 133, 144, 165, 198 n. 59, 217
 Khorazm 64, 80, 107, 124–126, 129, 131, 139, 142, 182, 191, 197 n. 54, 213, 215
 Khorazmian empire 140
 Khorazm-Shah 73, 81, 124, 127, 142, 199
 Khwandamir 198
 Khwarezm. *See* Khorazm
 Kiev 34, 56, 58, 59 n. 104, 64, 151, 186 n. 3
 Kievan Rus'. *See* Rus
 Kilij Arslan 23–24
 Kimāks. *See* Kimeks
 Kimeks 40
 Kingdom of Jerusalem. *See* Jerusalem,
 Kingdom of
 Kiriakos Gandzakets'i 165–168, 189–190, 200–201, 205
 Kišlig 117 n. 193
 Köbägün 99
 Kocho Tsa' 82
 Kököčü 113 n. 175
 Kölen, lake 85 n. 45
 Komania 36
 Komanoi. *See* Qipchaqs
 Komnenos 18, 30
 Komnenos, Byzantine dynasty 26–27
 Konchak 59 n. 104
 Konstantin, Armenian *Catholicos* 204
 Konya 143, 170
 Korokondame 61 n. 1
 Korokondamitis 61 n. 1
kortšin 100
 Kotjan 139 n. 83
 Kuban plain 61–62
 Kuban, river 61–62
 Kumani. *See* Qipchaqs 43
 Kun. *See* Qipchaqs
 Kura 144
 Kurdistan 145
kuren 89, 91–94
kurigen. *See* *kuren*
 Kuropalates 20 n. 46
 Kur, river 141
 Kutaisi 72, 144
 Kutan 146
 Kyrgyz 76 n. 12
 La Copa 65
 Lake Meozia. *See* Azov Sea
 Lakz 141
 Laskaris Theodore 32
 Latin Empire of Constantinople 19, 25, 32, 64
 Laz 30

- Laz dynasty 8–9
 Lazians. *See* Lazs
 Lazica 9, 28 n. 75
 Lazica, Kingdom of 8
 Lazs 8, 138
 Lebunian Hill, battle of 51
 Leo II 24
 Lesser Armenia. *See* Cilicia
Liao Annals 79
 Liegniz 149
 Limon 28 n. 75
 Lithuania 214
 Livonia 33, 214
 Lori 13
 Lori, principality 10
 Lo Vati 32
 Lukomor, Qipchaqs of 40
 Lyon, Second Council of 196

 Magyars 45, 47, 55
 Mahayana-Vajrayana Buddhism 2
 Maimun-Diz 172
 Malatya 14
 Malik Kamil, *amir* of Mayyafariqin 173 n. 68
 Mamasakhlisi 66
 Mamikonians 10
 Mamikonian tümen. *See* Sasun
 Mamluks 71, 118 n. 196, 119, 161, 173, 175, 183, 195–196, 208, 219
 Manuel I Komnenos 16–18, 27, 64
 Manzikert, battle of 8, 14, 30, 49
 Maragheh 136
 Marco Polo 156, 158, 170
 Mar Denha, Patriarch 196
 Mare Maggiore. *See* Black Sea
 Maritai 87 n. 57
 Martha, daughter of Bagrat IV 23
 Mashhad 133
 Master Roger 146 n. 115
 Matracha. *See* Matrega 7, 64
 Matrega 62, 64–65
 Matrica. *See* Matrega
 Maurokastron 6
 Mayyafariqin 173 n. 68
 Mazenderan 171
 Mediterranean Africa 217
 Mediterranean basin 163, 175
 Mediterranean Sea 174–175, 183, 226

 Melik al-Ashraf, governor of Ahlat 136
 Melitene. *See* Malatya
 Mendicant orders 69
 Mengü Temür 209
 Meng-wu 79
 Meotian civilization 61
 Meotide. *See* Azov Sea
 Merkits 81, 88–89, 91 n. 89, 92, 94, 100, 154, 190
 Merv 107, 133–134, 144, 221
 Mesopotamia 24, 161
Metropole 180
 Michael VII Dukas 23
 Michael VIII Palaeologus 196, 208 n. 108
 Middle East 23, 33, 119, 161, 163, 173, 194, 205
midsis patrni 68
 Mijdashen 200 n. 65
mingghan 101–103, 179
 Mingrelia 9
 Miriam, Queen of Iberia 23
 Mohammad II, Khorazm-Shah ii, 127, 131, 133
 Mologa, river 148
 Monastras 52
 Mongke. *See* Möngke
 Möngke 148, 159–162, 166–167, 170, 172, 174, 187, 205–206, 218
 Mongol conquest 84 n. 39
 Mongol empire ix
 Mongol Empire x, xii, 3, 4, 75, 87, 118, 121, 151, 155, 159, 182
 Mongolia 76 n. 12, 77, 80, 83, 100 n. 120, 126, 135
 Mongol invasion 124 n. 6, 214
 Mongols ix, x, xii, 1, 2, 21, 33, 35–36, 42, 49, 65, 74, 76 n. 10, 79–86, 88–89, 91 n. 91, 92, 94, 99–100, 102–104, 106–108, 114, 116–118, 121–122, 124, 126–131, 133–136, 138–140, 142, 144–146, 148–149, 151–152, 154–161, 163–165, 167–168, 170–173, 176–177, 180–182, 185–195, 198–207, 209–211, 214–218, 223–226
 Mongol Turks 80
 Monophysism 193–194
 Moravia 207
 Moscow 5, 181, 216
 Mosul 136, 144–145
 Moxoene 10

- Moxoene, principality of 13
 Mstislavl of Chernigov 125
 Mstislav of Chernigov 62
 Mstislav of Galich 138–139
 Mstislav Romanovich 186 n. 3
 Mughan 170
 Mughan plain ix, 160, 164, 170
 Muhammad II, Khorazm-Shah ii, 124,
 133–134, 163 n. 34
 Muquli 103
 Murwan-Kru 9

 Naimans 80–81, 94, 98, 101, 108 n. 162,
 191–192
 Narses, *Catholicos* 204–205
 Nasawi 126, 128, 131 n. 49, 141 n. 96
nasij 155
 Nasir-ud-Din Tusi 172 n. 62
 Nasir Yusuf, Ayyubid Sultan of Aleppo
 173
 Nawruz 198
 Naya 103
 Neijiang 143
 Nekün 87 n. 57
 Nestorianism 81–82, 174 n. 70, 187 n. 7, 191,
 195, 197, 203, 205–206
 Nestorians 192
 Nicaea 32
 Nicaea, Empire of 26, 30, 32, 143, 193
 Nicola Maurokatakalon 51
 Niketas Choniates. *See* Choniates Niketas
 Nikitin, Afanasij 210 n. 114
 Nishapur 131, 133–134, 221
 Nogai 163, 181, 209
nököd. *See* *nökör*
nökör 97
nomadfeudalism 96
nomadicfeudalism. *See* *nomadfeudalism*
 North Africa 163
 Northern Europe 62
 Norway 64
 Novgorod' 58, 64, 177, 179, 214
Noyon 90–91, 94, 97 n. 109, 116, 135, 190
nutug. *See* *nutunq*
nutunq 87
nutuq. *See* *nutunq*
 Nxchawan 202

Oboh. *See* *Oboq*
Oboq 66, 85–87, 89–90, 94, 97, 112–116, 120,
 121 n. 3, 162, 170, 176–177
 Ögedei 121, 128, 134–135, 143, 145, 149, 155,
 159, 167, 187, 193
 Oghuz 7–8, 21, 40
 Öirats 190
 Olgovichs 58
 Öljeitü 198
Onqu bogol 115
 Onon 144
Ordo 85
Ordos 80
 Orel 40
 Orkhon, river 143
 Orkhon valley 77
 Orontes, river 23
ortakh 158
ostikan 167–168
 Otrar 126, 128–129, 208
 Oxus. *See* Amu Darya

 Palestine 18 n. 37, 175, 195
 Panbak Mountains 141
 Pantikapaion 61 n. 1, 2
 Papacy 33
 Paphlagonia 24
 Parthenion 61 n. 1
Partitio Romaniae 17, 20
 Parwan 134
 Patrasys 61 n. 1
patronqmoba 68
 Patzinaki. *See* Pechenegs
 Patzinaks. *See* Pechenegs
Pax Mongolica 4, 121–122, 157, 224
 Pechenegs 7, 45–47, 49–52, 54, 58, 64
 Pegolotti. *See* Francesco di Balduccio
 Pegolotti
 Perevoloka 55
 Persia 28, 32–33, 75, 122, 133, 143–146, 161
 n. 28, 162, 193, 222
 Persian Gulf 158
 Persians 47 n. 48
 Pesochev 55
 Pest 149
 Phanagoreia 61 n. 1
 Philip II, King of France ii, 18, n. 37

- Plano Carpini, John 38, 77 n. 15, 99, 102, 105–108, 160, 186, 189, 191, 199, 205
- Poland 148–149, 207, 214
- Polovcian. *See* Qipchaqs
- Polovcians. *See* Qipchaqs
- Polovcy. *See* Qipchaqs
- Pontic basin 6
- Pontic steppes 76
- Pontus. *See* Black Sea 16, 20
- Pontus Euxinus. *See* Black Sea
- Poroz' 58
- Povest'*. *See* *Russian Primary Chronicle*
- Priluk 55
- Prussia 33
- Psellus, Michael 47 n. 47
- Qabul-qagan 86
- Qadagan-Tayzhi 88
- Qadag Bagatur 116
- Qadan 149
- Qadaq 203
- Qaldun Burqan 93 n. 96
- Qangli 129
- Qarachu 94, 113
- Qara-Khitai 80, 144
- Qara Qorum 143
- Qarluc Turks 127 n. 21
- Qasar 100
- Qayaligh 127
- Qazvini, Hamdullah Mustaufi 220
- Qifchaq. *See* Qipchaqs
- Qilich Arslan IV, Sultan of Rum iv, 160
- Qipchak. *See* Qipchaqs
- Qipchaq 24
- Qipchaqs 21, 35–36, 38–40, 46, 54, 64, 138, 145, 147, 181, 187, 193, 206–207, 209, 214
- Qirqiz. *See* Kyrgyz
- qmani* 68
- Qotlogh-Khan 128
- Qoumani. *See* Qipchaqs
- Qubasar 72
- qubchur* 167–168
- qubčur*. *See* *qubchur*
- qubi* 98
- Qubilai 4, 163, 170, 187, 197
- quda* 89, 112
- Qufchaq. *See* Qipchaqs
- Qulan-Bagatur 117 n. 193
- Qupchur. *See* Qubchur
- quriltai* 99, 143, 145, 147, 151, 175, 179, 203
- Qutlagh Shah 198 n. 59
- Qutlu Arslan 72
- Qutula-qagan 88
- Quyildar 116
- Rabban Ata 202–203
- Rabban Sauma 197
- Rashid ad-Din 87–88, 115, 117, 141 n. 96, 161 n. 29, 173, 185, 205, 219
- Rasudan of Georgia 141 n. 95, 144, 160, 165–166
- Redbeard. *See* Frederick I Barbarossa
- Richard of England (Lionheart) 18 n. 37
- Robert of Clari 37
- Roman Empire 6, 8
- Roman Nezdiloloich 58
- Romanos III Argyros 23
- Romanos IV Diogenes 14, 52
- Rome 8
- Rosia 64
- Rostov 138
- Rubruck, William of 38, 85, 105, 192, 205
- Rudhravar 220
- Rukn-ud-Din 172
- Rum. *See* Konya
- Rum Sultanate 20, 32–33, 193, 202–203
- Rum, Sultanate 24
- Rum, Sultan of 23, 175
- Rus' ix, 17, 19, 42, 45–46, 49, 54, 56, 58–60, 62, 72–73, 125, 139, 146–148, 156, 176, 181, 183, 188, 204, 207, 214, 222
- Russia x, 6, 34, 54, 56, 70, 75, 83–84, 104, 122, 138, 177 n. 82, 210, 216, 222
- Russian Primary Chronicle* 54, 62
- Russian princes 206
- Russian principalities 43, 55, 148, 159, 177, 179, 180 n. 88, 181–182, 209–210, 214–215
- Russians 58, 138
- Rustichello da Pisa 159
- Sača-Beki 92 n. 95
- sagwareulo* 66, 114
- Saladin 18 n. 37, 142 n. 101, 174
- Salah-ad-Din. *See* Saladin
- Salturid 24
- Samara 40

- Samarkand 81, 107, 129–131, 133, 135, 144, 213, 221
 Šams ad-Din, Azerbaijani Atabeg 71
 Samsun 28 n. 75
 Samuel of Ani 47
 Sanahin 203
 Sarai 4, 36, 179, 181, 183, 221
 Sarai, Bishop of 209 n. 109
 Sargis, *Bishop* 204
 Sar-i-Pul 130
 Sarir 141
 Sarkel 46
 Sarmatians 34, 51
 Sartaq 186, 204–205, 207
 Šarukan 21 n. 53
 Sassanids 61–62
 Sasun 13, 170
 Satyros 61 n. 1
 Sa'd al-Dula 206
 Scythians 46, 47 n. 48, 49–50
 Scyths. *See* Scythians
 Sebastia 202
Secret History of the Mongols 75, 81, 88 n. 70, 89, 91–92, 100 n. 118, 120, 102–103, 112, 114–116, 154, 174, 190, 192
 Selenga, river 81
 Seljuk ix, 8
 Seljuks 7, 14, 20–21, 23–25, 27, 32, 40, 42 n. 26, 64–65, 70, 72, 107, 125, 139, 143, 145, 164, 166, 193, 199, 208 n. 108
 Seljuk Sultan 165
 Seljuk Sultanate 69, 79, 144–145, 159, 182
 Semnan 133
 Serbs 19, 24
 Serenissima. *See* Venice
 Sevan Lake 8, 141, 193
 Sevastopol 32, 69
shahna 134, 135 n. 66, 136 n. 72
shahنشah 203 n. 79
 Shamakhi 218
 Shamanism 188, 194–195, 205
 She-wei 79
 Shig-qutuqu 134
 Shiism 198–199
 Shiite Theology 199
 Shiraz 199
 Shiremun 160 n. 21
 Shirvan 138–140, 170
 Shirvan-Shah 139
 Shughnān 158
 Siberian Khanate 5
 Siberian steppes 80
 Sighnaq 42 n. 26, 128
 Si-Hia 143
 Si-Hia, Kingdom of 80
 Sindike 61 n. 1
 Sinope 28 n. 75
 Sir Darya 128, 135, 139
 Sis 81 n. 21
 Sit, river 148
 Siunik, principality of 10
 Sivas 8, 14, 145, 170
 Skopje 24
 Slengge, river 100
Slovo. *See* *Tale of Igor's Campaign*
 Smisso 17
 Smolensk 58
 Sofia 24
 Soldaia. *See* Sudak
 Solgat 157, 183
 Sorqaqtani Beki 206 n. 93
 Soviet Union 38
 Sozopolis 52
 Speri 10
 Strabo 65
 Stroganov 5
 Subcaucasia 162, 217
 Sübe'etei Bagatur ix, 100, 130–131, 133, 135–136, 138, 147–149
 Sudak 16, 138
 Sugrov 21 n. 53
 Sukhumi 9
 Suleyman II 24–25
 Sultanate of Iconium 159
 Sultan of Bukhara 81
 Sung 145, 158, 161
 Sung Empire 80, 122
 Sunnism 193–194, 198–199
 Sunnites 194–195
 Suzdal' 148
 Svan 141
 Svyatopolk II of Kiev 56
 Svyatoslav I of Kiev 6, 62
 Svyatoslav Vsevolodich 58
 Syr-Darya 42 n. 26, 129
 Syria 12, 141, 152, 161, 173–175, 195

- Syrians 141
 Syunik 10, 13
 Syuniks 10
- Tabriz ix, 30, 32, 197–198, 202, 221
 Tachiks 165
 Tacitus 34
 Tagüder 186, 196–197
 Talas. *See* Jambul
 Talas steppe 135
 Talekhan 134
 Taman Peninsula 61 n. 1, 62
 Tamar 72
 Tamar, Georgian Queen 27
 Tamar of Georgia 12, 20–21, 26–28, 30, 68, 72–73, 136, 144, 200
 tamenga. *See* Tamgha
 Tamerlane 3–5, 105, 182, 220
 tamgha 168 n. 53
 tamunga. *See* tamgha
 Tana 4, 157, 179 n. 83, 181, 216 n. 7
 Tandzut 200
 Tangut 122
 Tanguts 76, 80
 Taoism 209
 Taqai 103 n. 134
 Taraun 10
 Tarkhat 103
 Tartars. *See* Mongols
 Tashir 141
 Tatars 36, 76, 77 n. 14, 82, 88, 94
 Tatar yoke 84
 Tatus 49
 Tayčiud 113 n. 175
 Tayk' 11
 Tbilisi 4, 20, 72, 136, 138, 141, 144, 159, 200, 221
 Tchu, river 80
 Tchu steppes 135
 Temüjin. *See* Chinggis Khan
 tenggeri. *See* tenggri
 tenggri 124 n. 9, 194
 Terek, river 163
 Terme 30
 Terunakan 154 n. 8
 Teutonic Knights 149, 214
 Theodosia. *See* Caffa
 Thermodon, river 30
- Thessalonica, Empire of 26
 Third Crusade 23
 Thracia 47
 Tibet 2, 198
 Tibetans 76
 Tigris 136
 Timujin. *See* Chinggis Khan
 Timurid invasions 4, 217
 Tirmizm, river 133
 Tiwrike 202, 203 n. 79
 Tmutarakan 62, 64
 Tmutarakan' 46, 62
 Töde Mengü 208 n. 108
 Toghachar 134
 Togha-Timur 219
 Toghus Khatun 174 n. 70, 206 n. 93
 Togtoga 154
 Tolui 129, 133–134, 144, 159–160
 Toluids 159
 Toqtai 181
 Toquchar. *See* Toghachar
 Töregene Khatun 145 n. 111, 160, 165 n. 40, 202 n. 78
 Torki 58
 Tourgokan 51
 Transcaucasia 28, 47, 163
 Transoxiana 127–128, 131, 135, 142, 208, 210, 221, 223–224
 Transylvanian Alps 47
 Trebizond 27–28, 30, 32, 64, 143, 225
 Trebizond, Empire of 25–26, 28, 30, 32–33, 80, 125, 143
 Tripoli 174
 Trubezh 58
 Tsikhis 68
 Tübegen 117
 Tugorkan 56 n. 94
 Tulabuqa 181
 tuman. *See* tümen
 tümen 91–92, 102–103, 117, 128, 144, 170, 179
 Tungusic people 79
 Turgokan 51 n. 68
 Turkestan 64, 75, 79, 81 n. 24, 118, 124–125, 127–128, 143, 152, 156, 158, 183
 Turkey 14
 Turkic Empire 62
 Turkic nomads 13–14, 21, 46, 54, 64, 69, 71
 Turkmen 14, 19

- Turkmenistan 131
 Turkmen nomads. *See* Turkic nomads
 Turkmens 164
 Turks 27 n. 73, 119
 Tus 133
 Tver' 148, 210 n. 114, 216
 Tyari 197
 Tyrambe 61 n. 1
 T'amt'a 203
 T'arh 203

 Uduid 88
 Ugrians 54
 Uighur language 80
 Uighurs 76, 127 n. 21, 143, 191–192
 Ukraine 7, 34
 Ulaghchi 208
 Ulqui Šilügel 82 n. 33
ulus 86, 98–100, 116, 135
 Ulus Jochi 4, 60, 75, 83, 156, 159, 161, 163, 170, 177, 180–182, 206, 209, 211–213, 216–217
 Umayyads 9
unagan bogol 108, 115–117
 Unč'in-Saqaid 92 n. 95
 United States x
 Uralic-Caucasian depression 2
 Ural, river 34, 45
 Urals 34, 40
 Urgench 107, 124 n. 6, 131, 134, 213, 221
 Urmiyah 14
 Urši'un, river 85 n. 45
 Usun 116
ütegu bogol 115
ütele bogol 115
 Uwas 88
 Uzbek 206
 Uzbek, *Atabeg* of Azerbaijan 136, 140
 Uzbekistan 128
 Uzes 7

 Vakhang of Georgia 112
 Vanakan, *Vardapet* 79 n. 16, 154, 202, 204
 Van khan 116
 Van-khan 81, 87–88
 Van Lake 14, 143, 145
 Varangians 6
Vardapet 154, 202, 204
 Variangians 16, 54

 Vaspurakan 10, 12, 170
 Vaspurakan, Kingdom of 10
 Vaspurakan, principality of 11, 14
 Venice 16, 19, 32, 118, 175 n. 75, 181, 208
 n. 108, 209, 213, 223
 Viatka 216
vilayet 170
 Vistula 149
 Vladimir' 148
 Vladimir I of Kiev 54, 62
 Vladimir Monomakh 56 n. 94, 58, 71
 Vladimir Mstislavich 58
 Vladimir Suzdal' 73, 179
 Volga 2, 6, 34, 36, 46, 51, 54, 56, 59, 62, 65, 70–71, 147–148, 157, 179, 209, 213, 216, 224
 Volga Bulgars 54, 64, 147, 209

 Wakhān 158
 Wassaf 158
 Wenceslaus of Bohemia 149
 Western Europe 95, 99–100, 110, 114, 118, 221, 225
 William of Rubruck 25 n. 65

 Xamshi 202 n. 77
 Xenophon 108 n. 161
 Xi Xia 122
 Xoranashtat 204

yams 168 n. 54
 Yaroslav I 179
yasa 125
 Yeke-Čeren 117 n. 193
 Yenissei 76 n. 12, 80
 Yesügei Bagatur 87–88
 Yovhannes, Bishop 67 n. 23
 Yuan 156–158, 209, 224–225
Yuanshi 143 n. 105
 Yuri Bogolyubsky 73
 Yuri Dolgorukiy 58
 Yuriy Vsevolodovich, Prince of Vladimir' 179
yurt 87

 Zakariah 201
 Zakaria Mkhargrdzel, Georgian general 24
 Zandana 125 n. 13
zandanichi 125

Zaporozhe, Qipchaqs of	40	Zichia	7, 62
Zechariah, Georgian general	27 n. 73	Zichia, diocese	62
Zhamuka	87–88, 91, 188	Zichians	30, 61
Zhand	42 n. 26, 107 n. 160, 128	Žirgin	116
<i>zhat</i>	89	Žirgin tribe	116