

## **Alans during the period of the Golden Horde of the XIII-XIV centuries**

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**Abstract.** The article is devoted to the region of the North-West and Central Caucasus during the period of the arrival of the Mongols in the Caucasus and the finding of the Alans under the leadership of the Golden Horde of the XIII-XIV centuries. A number of Mongolian, Arab-Persian and Russian sources are analyzed. It is emphasized that some of the Alans did not submit to the Mongols, which forced the Mongols to pay special attention to them. An assumption is made about the presence of a Mongol-speaking ethnic element in Alania, which later assimilated into the Alan environment.

**Keywords:** Alans, Caucasus, Golden Horde, Mongols, springs, sledges.

Northwestern and Central Caucasus in the XIII-XIV centuries were a mosaic in ethnographic terms, the peoples living here were at different levels of development of socio-ecological relations. The most numerous of them were the Iranian-speaking Alans, they are also "Aesir" or "Asu" in Chinese sources of the Mongol era, "YAesir" of Arab and European chronicles, who by this time had created early state formations in the mountains and foothills of the region.

The Mongol warriors Jebe and Subedei, having overcome the Main Caucasian ridge, invaded the Alanian borders. As evidenced by Muslim - Arab-Persian

sources and the Chinese dynastic history of "Yuan-shi" [1. p. 132.]. It is known that some of the aces who did not submit to the Mongols, when the next wave of the Mongol invasion swept over, ending with the capture of Kiev, namely, 3 thousand families, together with 40 thousand Polovtsians of Khan Kotyan, retreated to Hungary, where they began to serve the Hungarian kings and became known as the Yaesir, which retained their language until the XVIII century and are now an ethnographic group of the Hungarian people. Some of the Alans acted **differently**, as evidenced by the biography of Asatachi, who served the Mongols, placed in the "Yuan-shi", whose father Kanguz (Hanhuz in Chinese. -Auth.), The head of one of the state formations of the Aesir during the Mongol invasion voluntarily transferred to Mongol citizenship, for which the great Khan Ogedei left him the owner of his lands, awarded him the honorary title Badur (bogaty, batyr, hero. - Auth.) and paitsza - the state symbol of the Mongol Empire, confirming his authority. Kanguz formed a thousand aces warriors to participate in the Mongol campaigns and put his son Atachi at the head of them [2. p. 177.] Famous at the court of the great Mongol khans was the family of Asa Yuvashi, whose father Yanbadur (Elibadur in Chinese. - Auth.) Submitted to the Mongols together with the ruler of the Aesir Kanguz. [1. p. 275.] Aesir who lived in China during the Yuan era - the period of Mongol rule, were mainly soldiers of the imperial guard of the great Mongol khans - emperors of the Yuan Empire - the Mongol state in East Asia. [3. p. 144.] In 1335, the Aesir secured the ascension to the throne of the last Mongol emperor in China, Togon-Temur, suppressing the conspiracy of the Kipchak (Turkic) units of the imperial guard. In 1336 Toghon Temur sent a representative Yuan embassy to Western Europe, arriving in May 1338 in the city of Avignon in France. It is interesting that among the main officials of this mission were As Tohai and **Western Europeans André Frank, William Nassio**, who served the Mongols in China, and there was not a single Mongol or Chinese. [5. p. 155.]

The Arab chronicler Al-Omari, the author of the first half of the XIV century, points to the "appearance of Islam" among the Circassians and Alan Aesir. In turn, Russian authors report: "It is known that these peoples have their residence in the Caucasus mountains and are divided into many possessions under different names. Bravery, contempt for death, military exploits and the acquisition of self-interest by force of arms impute to themselves an honor and are not subject to any strong to the sovereign... Their dwellings are located in inaccessible places, and their characteristic courage protected them from conquest by alien peoples..."[4. p. 145.]

G. de Rubruck noted: "Having left... from Saray... and heading south, we got... to the Alans mountains... Alans on these mountains are still not conquered, so that out of every ten people of Sartakh (son of Batu Khan and heir to the throne of the Golden Horde. - Auth.) Two were to guard the mountain gorges so that these Alans would not leave the mountains to abduct their herds on the plain that stretches between the possessions of Sartakh, Alans and the Iron Gates (Derbent. – Auth.)... so that the Tatars who lived at the foot Alans mountains, it was necessary to give us 20 people to accompany us..."[7. p. 128.]

From which it follows that due to the attack of the Alans on the nearby Golden Horde possessions, the Mongols had to set up guards. This information, which reflects the situation in Alania in the middle of the XIII century, when the Mongol garrisons were stationed in fortresses at the exits from the mountains, are amazingly accurately reproduced in the folklore of the descendants of the Aesir-Alans - the Ossetian epic "Narts". It turned out that the names of the rulers of the Golden Horde were deposited in the "Nartiada" - the khans of Sainag-aldar (that is, Sain-khan, the "glorious khan", Batu-khan, Batu of the ancient Russian chronicles), Berke, the brother of Batu-khan, who deprived his nephew of the throne Sartakh, and Temnik Nogai [8. p. 104.]

According to the epic, the enemy of the Narts, Balga-Berke, sits at the exit from the mountain gorges with his numerous troops and watches over the Nart youths who make sorties with the aim of driving herds into the mountains. Alans especially suffered from Berke, who "settled in Ossetia," when large masses of them were transported across the Main Caucasian ridge and entered the service of Khan Hulag, the ruler of the Mongol state in Iran, with whom the Golden Horde waged long wars. The epic "Narta" reflects the historical situation in the North-West and Central Caucasus of the era of the Mongol conquests, where anti-Mongol motives are clearly visible. In this respect, the figure of Khanzargas (Genghis Khan) - the enemy of the Narts, the rapist, the kidnapper of girls, is very indicative. [8. p. 106.] Probably, the Alans and Circassian communities of the North-West Caucasus felt quite autonomously and after the Mongol invasion, the power of the Mongol Empire, and then the Golden Horde in their region, apparently, was not strong, as evidenced by their way of life. Although the peoples of the Northwest became famous not only in the military field, but also as farmers and cattle breeders. According to Al-Omari, the Circassians and Yaesir are "residents of well-equipped, crowded cities, but wooded, fertile mountains. They have sown bread, flowing udders (i.e., livestock), rivers flowing and fruits are obtained..." [6. p. 303.]

**Thus, some tribes of Alans and Circassians, who lived in the mountainous regions, inaccessible for the Mongolian troops, remained independent from the Dzhuchiev Ulus.**

And in the second half of the XIII century, the Golden Horde khans continued to fight with them. If the North Caucasian steppes were completely in the power of the Golden Horde, then this cannot be said even about the foothills of the North-Western and Central Caucasus. It should be borne in mind that the North-West and Central Caucasus since the time of Batu Khan became part of the personal domain of the Golden Horde khans, and therefore the rulers of the Dzhuchiev Ulus had a special interest in pacifying the region. The duration of this struggle, which did not

allow the Golden Horde to extend its power deep into the foothills, is evidenced by the campaign of the Golden Horde Khan Mengü-Timur in 1277 against the Yaesir (Alans), when their main city, Dedyakov, was taken and burned.

The campaign became known thanks to the participation in it of the ancient Russian princes, subject to the Golden Horde, **noted in the annals**. The Russian regiments marched together with the darkness of Mengü-Timur. As a result, on February 8, 1277, Dedyakov fell, and the allies - the Horde and the Russians "were full of great self-interest" [9. p. 165.]

The situation of constant war in the North-West and Central Caucasus was caused not only by the constant raids of independent Alan and Circassian tribes from the mountainous regions and the uprisings of their fellow tribesmen, subject to the Golden Horde, but also by the fact that this region was bordering on the Ilkhans empire of the Hulaguids - a Mongol state with a center in Tabriz on the lands of Azerbaijan and which included Persia, Mesopotamia, Syria, part of Asia Minor and Afghanistan, with which Ulus Jochiyev waged continuous wars after the collapse of the world Mongolian state, directly affecting the North-Western and Central Caucasus, although the hostilities were conducted in the possessions Hulaguids - on the lands of Georgia and Azerbaijan. The Alans and Circassians could become allies of the Hulaguids operating in the rear of the Golden Horde troops, taking advantage of their withdrawal to the Transcaucasus, which aroused the fears of the authorities of the Dzhuchiev Ulus.

As for the degree of economic development of Alan society, it was sedentary, and there was a tendency for the evolution of their settlements into cities, as mentioned above by Al-Omari. Evidence of the rudiments of urban culture among the Alans and Circassians is the existence of a large number of their settled settlements in the North-Western and Central Caucasus in the XI-XII centuries, the life of most of which was interrupted by the Mongol invasion, preventing them from turning into developed cities. In the Golden Horde era, small but numerous

settlements were replaced by several rapidly developing large cities, which quickly became prominent craft and trade centers.

In general, the North-West and Central Caucasus represented one of the important economic regions of the Golden Horde and the scale of its participation in international trade at that time is a clear evidence of this.

But natives of the North-West and Central Caucasus in the Golden Horde era lived not only in their homeland, as already mentioned above. Involved in the Mongol conquests, of which they both involuntarily became victims and participants, many of them ended up in different countries conquered by the Mongols - from Hungary to China. In China alone, at different times in the XIII-XIV centuries, 10 thousand Aesir served in the elite units of the guard for the great Mongol khans, not counting their family members. Aesir made up the personal guard of the Mongol rulers there [9. p. 199. ] The Aesir took an active part in the Mongol campaigns against China, where they suffered heavy losses in battles. The Aesir-Alans also served and lived in the Juchi Ulus outside their native mountains, where they are mentioned among 62 main tribes and peoples, in the overwhelming majority of Mongolian and Turkic origin, who constituted the main military forces and support of the Golden Horde throughout its history. [10. p. 361. ] Although Al-Omari notes that "the emergence of Islam in these peoples", not only among the Aesir, but also among the Circassians. It is known about the Alanian communities in the subservient of Ulus Jochi Crimea, in particular in the city of Stary Krym - Solkhat. [11. p. 194.]

During the wars of the Golden Horde with Timur, which were mainly fought on the lands subject to it, the North-West and Central Caucasus experienced an invasion of his troops. Timur's warriors under the command of Mirza Mohammed Sultan, Mirza Miranshah and Emir Jehan Shah moved from Azak (Azov – Auth.) to the Kuban. The Circassians resorted to the "scorched earth" tactics, "burned the meadows between Azak and Kuban," depriving Timur's army of food, since the

herds of cattle accompanying him fell from lack of food. However, despite the hardships and losses, Timur's warriors "robbed the Circassian ulus, seized a lot of booty... returning safely..." [13. p. 105.]

During the campaign, his soldiers cleared the forest and paved a road that allowed him to climb Elbrus. It is interesting to note that Timur was the first to use such a method as deforestation for tactical purposes in the war with the Caucasian mountaineers in order to deprive the highlanders of their natural habitat. "In the mountain fortifications and defended gorges, he had many clashes with the enemies of the faith and in all matters (his) army... won a victory, many of those infidels (Aesir-Auth.), Betraying them to the sword..., ravaged their fortresses, and by the grace of fate for the victorious army there was a countless booty from the property of the infidels. Returning victoriously from there... with countless booty, (Timur) stopped in the highest horde..." [12. p. 142.].

After the inclusion of the Northwestern and Central Caucasus, the Black Sea steppe region into the Jochiev Ulus, greater political stability is noted on its lands than in previous eras. In addition, the absence of spatial barriers and borders within this vast Eurasian empire, which existed for about three centuries, over the course of the life of five to six generations, made it possible to bring together the peoples who fell under the rule of the Golden Horde. The cultures of the Caucasian peoples for a long time were formed and developed in a single system of ties with the civilizations of other peoples of the Golden Horde, both steppe - Mongols, Turks, and sedentary - Eastern Slavs, Finno-Ugrians, Iranians, Greeks, Italians, which brought them closer and led to unification into united multinational states like the Golden Horde. Moreover, in the history of the peoples of the North-West and Central Caucasus, this was the first experience in their history of a centuries-old hostel as a part of the world empire, and, in contrast to subsequent times, during all the wars with the Mongols and their Golden Horde successors, it did not put these peoples on the edge of extermination and existence as ethnic groups in their

historical lands. But this does not exhaust the consequences of the Golden Horde era for the peoples of the North-West and Central Caucasus.

Thus, the long-term and intensive historical contacts of the peoples of the North-West and Central Caucasus with the Mongolian and Turkic steppe tribes, both in this region and beyond, objectively created conditions for cultural mutual influences. For example, they can be judged by the data of the descendants of the Ases-Alans - Ossetians, in whose vocabulary there is a noticeable amount of borrowings from the Mongolian language, in particular in vocabulary, toponymy and family nomenclature, which makes us assume that there is a Mongol-speaking ethnic element in Alania, which may have assimilated into the Alanian environment. The contacts of the Alans and the steppe conquerors in the Mongol era found a relief reflection in the content and structure of the Ossetian Nart epic.

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