IN THIS ISSUE: The War of the League of Cambrai

Turmoil in northern Italy: France and the Holy League at war

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• Machiavelli’s *Art of War*
• The Battle of Marignano, 1515

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Letters

Reader’s question
Dear editor,
I have some comments regarding the article entitled ‘The Mongol Invasion of the Khwarazmian Empire: The Fierce Resistant of Jalal-e Din’, published in Medieval Warfare, Vol. II, Issue 3 (pp. 43-48), written by Dr. Manouchehr Khorasani and Dr. Dr. Kaveh Farrokh. There are several details they state as fact, while I have read differently in my sources. The Mongol main army did reach the Jaxartes River in the autumn of 1219, more than one year after the Mongol caravan incident. But before that, a Mongol army operated in the plains north of Aral Lake. Mohammad II, after taking time to assemble a large army, set out against it. He found, after some furious fighting, that even with his large force he could not defeat 14,000 Mongol units of 1000 (April 1219). Ibn al-Athir says that Mohammad “… realized his weakness since he had been unable to win a victory over a part of Chingiz Khan’s army. How would it be if they all came with their ruler?” This important part is left out of the narrative and therefore gives no context to the decision by Mohammad not to challenge the Mongols in a big battle.

Once the Mongol main forces arrived along the Jaxartes and divided into many columns, following them becomes a complex matter. The authors do not go into detail, but, even so, they mention several facts about which others have written a different account. Some examples:
- Joci took Jand in April or May 1220. This was not about the same time as Toli entered Khurasan (February 1221, see below).
- Cinggis Qan detached forces to hunt down Mohammad from Samarkand in May 1220. These were the first Mongol forces to cross the Oxus. Toqucar remained behind near Balkh, while Sube’reeti and Jede hurried to Nishapur (arrived 24 May). Mohammad left this city two weeks before they arrived (12 May). The Mongols pursued Mohammad through Central Iran, but failed to catch him. Mohammad returned to the area south of the Caspian Sea. The Mongols followed. Mohammad fell ill and died in October 1220 or just afterwards. The article says November 1221. The whole affair is placed too late in the narrative.

Regarding the presupposition of why Mohamad Khwarazm Shah decided to confront the Mongol armies, we have relied on Persian sources that corroborate the fact that the Khawarazshahs were actually overconfident of their military capabilities, and it was this, coupled with their greed, that led to the attack on the Mongol caravanserai, which happened twice.

The reader’s assertions regarding events and dates, when checked against the original sources in Persian (not the English translations), regrettable reveal serious inconsistencies. Regarding the fall of Jand, our narrative is corroborated by Allā-ā-lātā Atā ol Molk bin Bah-e-din Mohammad bin Mohammad bin Jovayni, in the work Tārix Jahāngalāye Joveyni (Volume I, Tehran 1999, p. 71), and Raśid-e Din Fazollāh Hamedāni, in Jame al Tāvxārī (compiled and edited by Mohammad Rošān and Mostafā Moussavi, Volume I, Tehran 1999, p. 479), both primary Persian sources.

This clear divergence, or discrepancy, indicates that the reader has probably mostly used several somewhat indirect translations, most notably Thackston’s work, whereas we have used primary Persian sources. While the English translation by Thackston is excellent and is not being called into question here, several of the reader’s claims, while indeed based on a proper reading of certain books and sources, are contradicted by our study of the original sources instead of translations. For example, the reader’s claim regarding the sequence of events pertaining to the Fall of Samarqand and the role of Mohammad Khwarazmshah doesn’t coincide with the original narrative of Joveyni (Volume I, pp. 89-96) and Raśid-e Din (Volume I, pp. 500-505). The same goes for the campaigns in Khorasan, which are corroborated by Joveyni (Volume I, pp. 127, 131-140) and also by Sahāb-e Din Mohammad Zeydān’s Sirat Mankoberny (Tehran 1999, pp. 80-81), the single date of Jorjanieh’s fall is a matter of dispute. One should note that there is a confusion between the area named Jorjanieh and the city of Jorjanieh. Juweini says: “Khwarazm is the name of the area, its real name is Jorjanieh”. Note that there is also an excellent summary of these events in Abbās Eqbāl Āštiyāni’s Tārix-e Moqol (The History of the Mongols, Tehran 1986, pp. 53-54).

In addition, we would like to mention the following points in response to the reader’s comments:
- Mohammad II’s defeat is not mentioned. We agree that our article could provide more contexts for his son’s resistance, but the life of Mohammad II was not the focus of our article. However, this point was mentioned in our article.
- Joci and Toli’s campaigns were separated, but individually, they were component parts of a bigger plan, and as such are described in conjugation with each other. The same goes for Toqucar and Toli’s attacks.
- Regarding the death of Muhammad II, there is no unanimity

Answer
Dear reader,
We are delighted to have the opportunity to address your comments, even if they are somewhat indirect, insofar as they concern certain details relating to the background and events pertaining to Mankoberny’s father, rather than Jalaledin Mankoberny himself. In particular, we believe it is important to note that the subject’s father was not at all the focus of our article. Before addressing the important fact that there is a divergence of secondary and tertiary reports from the original Persian sources themselves, let us first have regard to a clear matter of contention.

Regarding the presupposition of why Mohamad Khwarazm Shah decided to confront the Mongol armies, we have relied on Persian sources that corroborate the fact that the Khawarazshahs were actually overconfident of their military capabilities, and it was this, coupled with their greed, that led to the attack on the Mongol caravanserai, which happened twice.

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- Joci and Toli’s campaigns were separated, but individually, they were component parts of a bigger plan, and as such are described in conjugation with each other. The same goes for Toqucar and Toli’s attacks.
- Regarding the death of Muhammad II, there is no unanimity