



## Battle of Köşe Dağ, 1243

### Summary :

In the summer of 1243, the army of the Mongol General Baydju Noyon engaged in battle with the troops of the Sultan of Iconion Kaykhusraw II (1236-1245) in Köşe Dağ (Chmankatuk). The Seljuks were defeated. Their Sultan escaped from the scene of battle, later becoming a Mongol vassal.

### Date

Summer (26th of June or 2nd of July) 1243

### Geographical Location

Köşe Dağ (today Suehri, 120 km from Sivas [Sebasteia])

## 1. Historical framework of the battle

The battle of Köşe Dağ (Kjose dag or Kjose dagh), in the summer (26th of June or 2nd of July) 1243, is mentioned in various historical writings. It is registered in Persian and Arab annals, as well as in Byzantine, Armenian and West-European sources.<sup>1</sup> The abundance of sources can be explained by the fact that the event coincided with the beginning of the [Mongol invasion](#) in [Asia Minor](#), which subsequently expanded in Russia, Eastern Europe, and Central Asia.

The conflict between the [Sultanate of Seljuk Rūm](#) and the Mongols began in the 1220s, during the reign of the great Mongol ruler Genghis Khan (c. 1155-1227). The Mongol armies invaded the Caucasus, conquered Georgia and Armenia, and overcame the Shah of Chorezm. Prior to that, in 1225, they had invaded Armenia, conquering its capital, and reaching as far as the city of Tbilisi in Georgia.<sup>2</sup> All neighboring rulers (of Georgia, Armenia, the Mongols, the Sultanate of Ikonion, as well as Egypt and [Armenia Minor](#) ([Cilicia](#))) formed a coalition against Genghis. The Shah of Chorezm was defeated by the Mongol General Charmagan. In 1235, the [Kuriltaj](#) of the Mongol troops in the capital Karakorum decided to launch an invasion against Russia and the Eastern European lands, headed by Khan Batu. A second wing under General Charmagan headed for the Caucasus. In 1236, ten years after the first appearance of the Mongols in Caucasus, Charmagan, accompanied by the widow of Genghis Khan, is mentioned by the Armenian historian Ggrigor Aknerzi to have called a Kuriltaj of more than 110 warlords.<sup>3</sup> This time, the Mongols brought their families and, armed with battering-rams, entered Asia Minor under a new leader, Baydju [Noyon](#). In Armenian accounts, an impressive army recruited from all enslaved peoples crossed the borders of the Seljuk (Iconian) Sultanate in 1242. Karin was the first city they conquered and devastated. The campaign ceased for the winter afterwards.<sup>4</sup> The Seljuk Sultan Kaykhusraw II (1235-1245) took advantage of this relapse in order to make military preparations and build alliances against the Mongols. The Seljuk army also included Greeks, Franks, Arabs, Armenians, Latins and Kurds. The Sultan sought alliance with the Armenian ruler of Armenia Minor, Hetum I (1226-1269).

Some historians exaggerate in regard to the number of the Seljuk army suggesting the number of 400,000, while others diminish it to 70,000.<sup>5</sup> The narrative of William Roubrouk, envoy of the French King to the Mongol court, who passed through the battle scene some ten years later, puts the number at 200,000 which seems closer to reality.<sup>6</sup> The Mongols within it most probably numbered some 30,000, or three toumans (military unit comprising 10,000 men).

## 2. The battle

The battle took place in the vicinity of Köşe Dağ or Chmankatuk, between the towns of Karin and Erzindjan.<sup>7</sup> Baydju Noyon divided the Mongols into numerous companies, interspersing them with units from the other nationalities. Mixed companies commanded by Georgian and Armenian princes attacked and defeated the Seljuk army.<sup>8</sup> The Sultan himself barely managed to escape. Then the Mongols pursued and slaughtered those who had failed to flee. Horrifying accounts of terrible Mongol cruelty and brutality covered the world.



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The Byzantine viewpoint is expressed in [Nikephoros Gregoras' Rhomaike Istoría](#).<sup>9</sup> It tells the story in more detail than others ([Akropolites](#) and [Pachymeres](#)). According to it, during the reign of Byzantine Emperor (Emperor of Nicaea) [John III Ducas Vatatzes](#) (1222-1254), future Byzantine Emperor [Michael VIII Palaiologos](#) had fled to the Sultan of Ikonion, who was raising an army against the «Scythians» (i.e., the Mongols). The Sultan formed one contingent from enslaved «Romaioi» (i.e. Byzantines), putting them at the front of his army to imply that he was receiving help from the Byzantines. When the Mongols saw this army, they fled. However, one of the Sultan's kinsmen betrayed him, and the battle was ultimately lost.

Sivas ([Sebasteia](#)) was the next town destroyed by the Mongols after Erzerum. Although the inhabitants handed over everything to the conquerors, the town was laid waste along with its walls. [Caesarea](#), second capital of the Seljuks, was razed to the ground and its population decimated.

The Seljuk Sultan sought help from John III Doukas, meeting him at the Meander river. The Byzantine ruler offered mere encouragement to the Seljuk, contributing no real help. The Iconian Seljuk Empire became a Mongol vassalate and paid tribute to its conquerors. Kaykhusraw II died in 1245. Under his successors, the state was governed by Mongol representatives. [Nicaea](#) preserved its territory at this difficult time when the Mongols conquered all Asia Minor as far as Sidon in Syria.

### 3. Consequences

The Seljuk Sultanate of Rūm was destroyed. Major commercial centers between Asia and Europe, like Caesarea and Sebasteia (Sivas), declined.<sup>10</sup> Armenia Minor was the next land threatened by the Mongol menace. Its rulers sent envoys to Baydju Noyon asking for peace. The negotiations were held in Caesarea, the outcome leaving Cilician Armenia independent but obliged to contribute armies when called upon. Some years later (1245-'7), the negotiations continued in Karakorum. In 1253-1254, the ruler of the land Hetum I presented himself at the court of the great Mongol Khans.<sup>11</sup> The Mongol army continued its raids in Asia Minor. In 1245, it reached Damascus. It seems that at this time the Mongol General Baydju Noyon had already established himself in Mughan (Iran),<sup>12</sup> for it was there that the Mongol governor of Iran and founder of the Ilhanid dynasty in Iran — Hulagu — arrived in 1256.

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1. See Howorth, H., *History of the Mongols from the 9th to the 19th Centuries*, 2 (London 1888), p. 44 sqq.
  2. Галстян, А. "Завоевание Армении монгольскими войсками", in: *Татаро-монголы в Азии и Европе* (Москва 1977), pp. 167-169.. See *Idem*, *Армянские источники о монголах, извлечения из рукописей XIII-XIV вв.* (Москва 1962).
  3. Grigor, Aknerci, *History of the Nation of the Archers by Grigor Akanc* (Cambridge 1954), p. 304.
  4. Grigor, Aknerci, *History of the Nation of the Archers by Grigor Akanc* (Cambridge 1954), p. 306.
  5. The number of 400,000 is given in the Georgian annals - see Гордлевский, В.А., *Избранные сочинения 1. Государство Сельджукидов в Малой Азии* (Москва 1960), p. 63. 70,000 is the number cited by Arab historian Ibn Bibi, See Houtsma, Th., *Recueil des textes relatifs à l'histoire des Seldjucides 4, Histoire des Seldjucides d'Asie Mineure d'après l'Abrégé du Seljouknameh d'Ibn Bibi* (Leiden 1902), p. 187.
  6. Гильом де Рубрук, *Путешествие в восточные страны*, ed. Н. П. Шастиной (Москва 1957); Гордлевский, В.А., *Избранные сочинения 1. Государство Сельджукидов в Малой Азии* (Москва 1960), p. 63.
  7. On the different forms of the name see: Howorth, H., *History of the Mongols from the 9th to the 19th Centuries*, 2 (London 1888), p. 45.
  8. Киракос, Гандзакеци, *История Армении* (Тифлис 1910), pp. 266-267. (In Armenian language)
  9. *Nikephoros Gregoras, Rhomäische Geschichte : Historia Rhomaike*, übersetzt und erläutert von Jan Louis Van Dieten,(Stuttgart 1988), Book III,



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10. See Успенский, Ф.И., *История Византийской империи 3* (Москва 1948, repr. 1997) p. 566.

11. Микаелян, Г. Г., *История Киликийского армянского государства* (Ереван 1952), p. 297.

12. *The Cambridge Medieval History. vol. IV/1, Byzantium and its Neighbours*, (ed.) J. M. Hussey (The Cambridge University Press, 1966), pp. 748-749.

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### Glossary :

	<b>Kuriltay</b> initially the word denoted a tribal council: Xuriltai or Xuraltai. During Genghis's rule, it became the ruler's council, where he had the last word. It was convoked prior to great campaigns. Lesser warlords such as Chormagan, also convoked Kuriltays.
	<b>Noyon</b> feudal grandees and vassals of the great rulers. During Genghis's campaigns they led military and territorial units: hundreds, thousands, and Tumans: units of 10,000 troops.

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