

The First Raid of Mongols on Russia

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和文要旨：13世紀モンゴル軍は中近東、ヨーロッパの一部を攻略したが、資料その他に基づく通説に従えば、1223年5月乃至6月、その一支隊が初めてロシアに侵寇し、チュルク系遊牧民族であるポロベツ族と南ロシアのロシアの諸公との連合軍を、カルカ河畔の戦いにおいて完膚無き迄に撃破したとある。それが5月か6月かは依然議論の存するところであるが、年については一般に認められてきた。しかし最近モンゴル軍がカフカス山脈を越えたとされる時期と関連して、侵寇を1222年とする説が現れた。資料によりその可能性があるか否かについて論じるのが小論の趣旨である。

【キーワード】モンゴルのロシア侵寇、カルカ河畔の戦い、発生年

Abstract : In the early 13th century when Mongols invaded Middle and Near East and a part of Europe, its branch intruded into Russia for the first time. According to the generally accepted opinion the invasion occurred in 1223. However, some historians recently raise question to this point and insist that the incident must have occurred a year before, in 1222. The aim of this article is to examine, whether such a view is possible or not on the ground of historical sources.

【Keywords】Mongol invasion of Russia, Kalka river incident, year of the incident.

1 . Introductory note

According to A. d'Ohsson¹⁾, the battle on the Kalka river took place on May 31, 1223, in which Russian princes had been attacked for the first time and defeated completely by the invading Mongols, lead by Jube (只別) and Subdai (速不台) --- famous among Mongols for their audacity in mind and notorious among other nations for their atrocities in deed --- under the banner of Batu Khan (拔都汗), the second son of Jöchi Khan (朮赤汗), who was in turn the eldest of the sons of Genghiz Khan the Great (成吉思汗). Saguchi (*op.cit.*) comments on this point, however, that there exist also other sources dating the incident on 16 June, 1223.

On the other hand, L. de Hartog²⁾ raises question about these dates and insists, referring to the works of B. D. Grekov³⁾ and B. Spuler⁴⁾, that the battle occurred not on June 16, 1223, but in the middle of June, 1222.

L. de Hartog's argument based on two points:

- (1) If we take it for granted according to the opinion generally accepted hitherto, that the battle on the Kalka river took place in 1223, be it in May or in June, we have to suppose, that Mongols had been somewhere in the South of Russia for as long as one and a half year without any actions, after they had crossed Caucasian Mountains into Russia, which seems hardly credible.
- (2) After the battle on the Kalka river, Mongols returned to join with the main forces of Genghiz Khan staying then on the left bank of Syr Dar-ya, where they had arrived in January 1223 on their way to Karakorum (Qaraqorum) and in the autumn of this year they had already set out homewards. Therefore, according to L. de Hartog, if the attack was made in 1223, it is difficult for the expeditory forces to have joined with the main forces during their stay on the bank of Syr Dar-ya.

Thus, concerning the date of the battle on the Kalka river there exist three possibilities: May 31, 1223, June 16, 1223 and the middle of June, 1222.

Although 1223 seems to be widely accepted among historians⁵⁾⁶⁾, as to its certainty, the author would say, the question is still open, and the main aim of this article consists in the examination of the year of attack, putting aside for the moment the above three possibilities, even though the author is well aware of the fact, that the final solution is not always available in view of the scarcity of

the source materials. He only wishes to show the reason why some historians are at variance in opinion about this question.

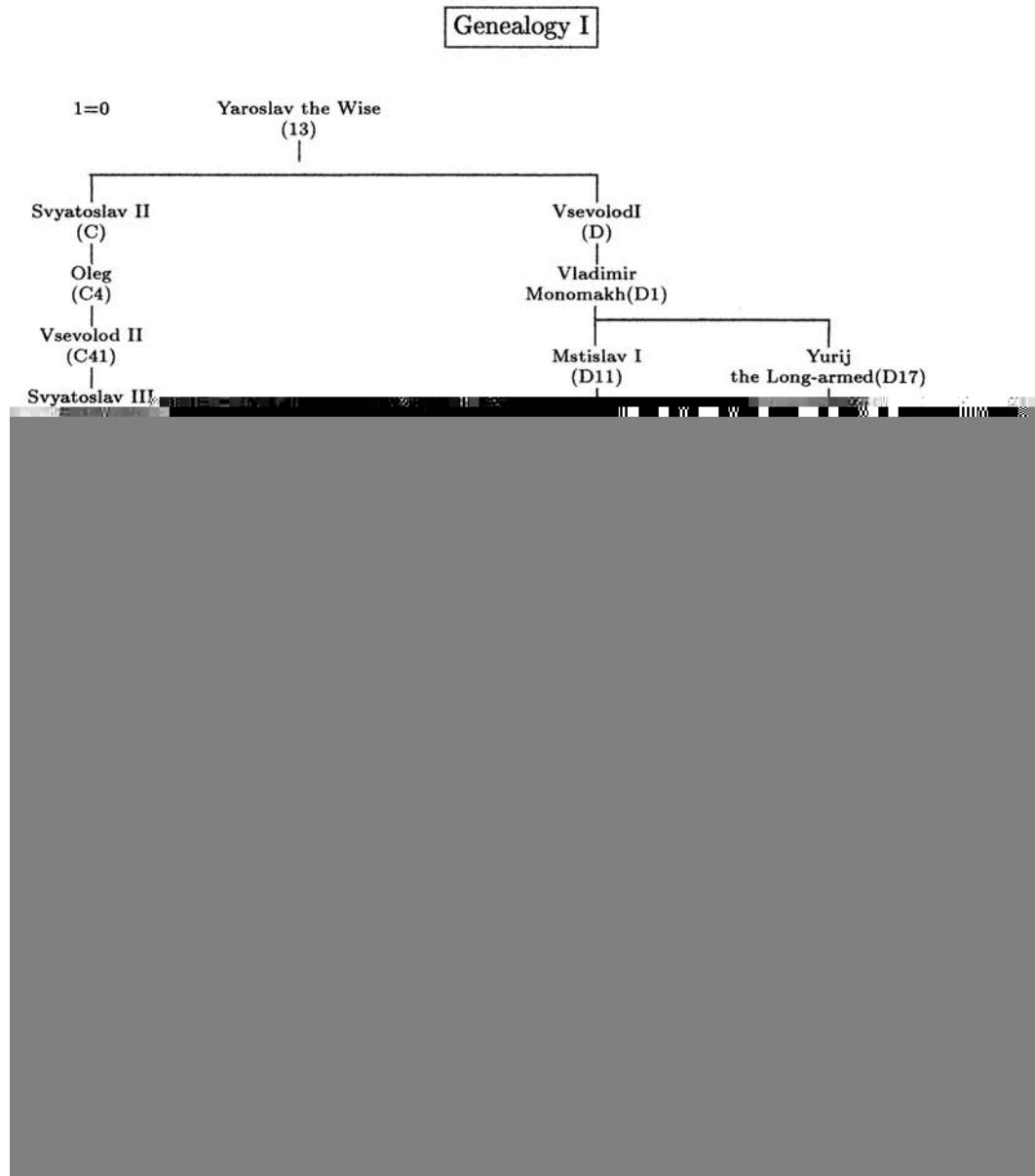


Table 1

2 . Genealogy of the Russian Princes

It is very embarrassing to identify each Russian prince owing to the circumstances, that there are so many names identical even with patronymics (father's name); e.g. there are three famous princes among Rurikids named Vladimir: Vladimir Svyatoslavich (Vladimir, the son of Svyatoslav), two Vladimir Yurievich (Vladimir, the son of George), two Vladimir Yaroslavich (Vladimir, the son of Yaroslav). Even one of the most famous princes in the Russian history, Ivan Groznyj (Ivan the Terrible), is but one of the six illustrious princes called by the same name and the same patronymic of Ivan Vasilievich. To avoid this difficulty, Russians often call the illustrious princes by their alias, or by byname, to identify them at once.

These circumstances in view, we, members of *the Society for the Study of Old and Mediaeval Russia in Kyoto*, gave numbers to

each descendant of Rurik dynasty according to his lineage and according to his generation in the genealogy of Rurikids, a part of which is illustrated as Genealogy I and II (*cf.* Above).

Thus, Mstislav of Kiev, who took part in the battle on the Kalka river, can be identified with the Grand Duke of Kiev Mstislav III *Stáryj* (the Old) (J12), a son of Roman and a grandson of Rostislav; and Vladimir of Smolensk with the Duke of Smolensk (J22), a son of Rurik and a grandson of Rostislav, that is, he is a cousin of Mstislav III.

We can find some other names of princes who participated in the battle on the Kalka river in the historical sources such as Russian Chronicles. Namely, Duke of Galich Mstislav *Udalój* (the Bold) (J51), son of Mstislav *Khrábryj* (the Brave) (J5) and grandson of Rostislav (D116=J); prince Daniil (I111), son of Roman (I11) and grandson of the Grand Duke of Kiev Mstislav II (I1); Duke of Chernigov Mikhail *Svyatój* (the Holly) (G41), son of Vsevolod *Chérmnyj* (the Ruddy-Faced) (G4); Vsevolod (J122), son of Mstislav, grandson of Roman etc.

As to the prince whom A. d'Ohsson referred to as Daniyal the Duke of Galich, it is, in fact, no other man than that Daniil (I111), whose father is, as above mentioned, the son of Roman (I11) and grandson of Mstislav II (I1). He was once elected to the throne of the Dukedom of Galich in 1211, and from which driven in the next year, he was given the throne of Volyn. Then, having bestowed the Dukedom of Volyn to his younger brother Vasilko (I112), recovered again the title of the Duke of Galich in 1238. Therefore, in 1222 or in 1223 he was still a Duke of Volyn and was not a Duke of Galich.

Again, as to the person A. d'Ohsson identifies as Georgi (George), Grand Duke of Súzdal', it is in fact that Yurij¹ (K3), who was a son of the Grand Duke of Kiev Vsevolod III *Bol'shóe Gnezdo* (the Big-Nested) (D177=K) and a grandson of the former Grand Duke of Kiev Yurij *Dolgorúkij* (the Long-Armed) (D17). He has become Grand Duke of Vladimir by succession after the death of his elder brother Konstantin (K1), which means that he was the Grand Duke of Vladimir at the time of the battle on the Kalka river.

He himself did not participate in fighting although he was asked for aid in the battle with the Mongols. Instead, he sent his nephew Vasilko (K11), a son of his brother Konstantin (K1), who was too late in coming to the battle field, and since at the report of the defeat of Russians he was still on his way, soon turned back his men (*viz.* above, Genealogy of princes).

As a result, princes who fought with Mongols were those, who had their feuds in the South Russia, such as Kiev, Galich, Volyn, Chernigov and Smolensk.

3 . A brief outline of the incident

The vast space of plain that separates the West from the Eastern countries extending far and wide on the right bank of the River Dnepr --- the Kipchak plain, or *Desht Kipchak*, --- was in those days peopled with tribes of the Turkish origin, *Pólovets*, each led by their own leaders, *khans or khagans*, forming a loose tribal union. In the year about 1222 or 1223, into this realm of nomads suddenly intruded the above-mentioned Mongols, elsewhere pursuing and killing the defeated *Polovets*.

Some of the *Polovets* fled westwards and a khan, called Kotyak by name, came with his men bringing many gifts to the Duke of Galich Mstislav Mstislavich (J51) calling him in aid, because he was the husband of Kotyak's daughter and stood, therefore, to Kotyak in relation of son-in-law.

According to the *Nikon's or Patriarchal Chronicle* (*Hu*) , under the rubric of the year 6733, Kotyak told to him and to the other Russian princes as follows:

“ Our land has been deprived of by Tatars today, they will come and plunder your land tomorrow. So we came to make you known about this. You understand the situation and help us⁷⁾. ”

At this report Mstislav sent for his fellow princes to discuss with them about this danger. Finally they decided to gather forces and encounter the unknown enemy then called *Tartars*, after Tartarus, a mythical name of the infernal world. When they began to move forth with a great number of men, the Mongols sent their envoys twice, persuading the Russians to lay down arms under the pretext that they came only to punish *Polovets*, “ their own former stablemen ”, and never intended to attack Russians, and required them to expel *Polovets* out of the Russian territory.

However, the persuasion of the Mongols answered by the death of envoys, and allied forces of the Russians and *Polovets* crossed the river Dnepr with twenty thousand men in number, attacked and broke the outpost of the Mongols. When the allied forces came to and stood at a ford of the Khortitsa river, one of the tributaries of the Dnepr, there came the information that a Mongol patrol was coming to reconnoitre the allied forces.

At this information, the Russian princes, mostly young and hot-blooded, rode off to attack the enemy heading the whole allied forces. Some of the patrol men were killed on the spot, and the others turned to flight. The Russian princes went on after them eight days pursuing and killing their foes, until they arrived at the bank of the river Kalka. Here, Mongols suddenly turned to attack. In spite of the brave and valiant struggle of the Russians, they had been completely beaten mainly owing to the retreat of the flighted *Polovets* forces. Captured princes were laid down to be suffocated to death under the planks on which Mongols held a banquet for their victory over Russians.

According to this chronicle, this incident happened 16th day of June. Afterward, having devastated regions in the vicinity, Mongols retreated from the Russian land to fall in with the main forces of Genghiz Khan at Sir Dar-ya.

4 . Kalendar of the Mediaeval Russia

Nikon 's Chronicle is a document dealing with incidents covering almost all over the whole Rus' and believed to have been compiled in 16th century somewhere between 1539 and 1542, gathering a wide range of sources such as other local chronicles and historical documents, thus acquiring a character of the most copious and minute description of each incident.

However, minuteness does not always ensure the merits of a description: a wide collection of sources without careful evaluation may only bring about a confusion in the whole process of the described incident, owing to the probable contradictions among passages of which it is made. In this regard, we must be very careful in dealing with these materials.

According to this chronicle, the battle on the Kalka river is described, as already mentioned, under the rubric of the year 6733.

In the Mediaeval Russia, the Alexandrian Kalendar or Style (counting years since the Creation of the World) was adopted according to the Kalendar, then currently used in the Byzantine Empire, but with only difference that the numbering of year in Byzantine Style is by 8 years more in number than that of the Alexandrian.

The author does not intend to enter into this problem here though it has its own reason⁵⁾. Anyway, according to this calculation mechanically applied, subtracting 5508 from the number of the year in Byzantine Style, we should have the number corresponding to that of the dominical year.

In the Byzantine Empire, however, a year begins in September (so called *The September Style of Kalendar*), and in Russia in March (*The March Style of Kalendar*, *Мартовский стиль*), and Russians did not change this principle at the introduction of the Byzantine system. In consequence, there arises a problem, which consists in that, as the beginning of a year differs in both systems just six months, in which of March, that is, in March before or after September, should be considered to be the beginning of the year having the same numbering of year as that of the Byzantine system.

Usually, the beginning of the Russian year is considered to begin in March after the beginning of the Byzantine year.

Accordingly, when the time occurred of some incident in the text of documents evidently contradict with the year it actually occurred, for example, in case, if the date and the day of the week of happenings do not coincide with the year described, the discordance used to be ascribed to the error of the chronicler.

Thus, in so called *The Senior* or *The Synod Edition of The Novgorodian First Chronicle* (*Новгород*) under the rubric of the year 6716 we find the following article.

Lazor, Vsevolod's man, came from Volodimir ', and ordered Boris Miroshkinits to kill Oleks Sbyslavits in Yaroslav's court; and he was killed guiltless, on Saturday, March 17, St. Alexis' day⁶⁾.

If we suppose the year in which occurred this incident as 1208 subtracting 5508 from 6716, then the day of the week of March 17th must be Monday, and hence we should have to conclude this information unreliable.

According to N. G. Bereztkov⁹⁾, the phenomena have not missed the attention of the philologists in past such as, J. P. Klug¹⁰⁾, N. S. Arcybashev¹¹⁾, I. D. Belyaev¹²⁾, V. M. Undolskyj^{13) 14)}, A.A. Kunik¹⁵⁾ etc., investigators from the beginning of thirties up to the sixties in the 19th century.

In the field of the historical sciences, there can be observed a controversy between P. V. Khavsky^{17) 18) 19) 20)} and I. D. Belyaev¹²⁾ as to the chronology of the historical events: against Belyaev's traditional opinion Khavsky insisted, that the year must have begun in March six months before the beginning of the Byzantine year. This controversy seemingly ended with the victory of the traditional point of view, but no remarkable progress in the solution of the problem is said to have been attained from this rather sterile controversy.

Apart from these scholars, concerning this problem we can name, among others, J. P. Krug, E. Bonnell, A. Engelman etc.

But in recent years, in the course of investigation it has become more and more evident, that certainly there do exist cases, in which the Russian year must have begun six months before the Byzantine year (so called *The Ultramarch Style*, ~~Ультрамарш~~).

At the turn of the 19th century there appeared a series of studies by M. V. Stepanov^{23) 24) 25)}. He proved that rubric of year in the Russian chronicles has two kinds as to the numbering of the year concerned: while the one is customary numbering exactly corresponding to the dominical year plus 5508, the other corresponds to the dominical year plus 5509. This conclusion was made on the basis of his detailed examination of articles in the most important chronicles: *The Russian Primary Chronicle* () or *The Laurentian Chronicle* ()²⁶⁾ which is also called, after its incipit, *The Tales of Bygone Years* () and includes in it *The Suzdal' Chronicle* () as its successor, dealing with the events up to the year 6813(*op.cit.*), *Hypatian Chronicle* ()²⁷⁾ and *The First Novgorodian Chronicle* () up to the end of the 12th century.

He maintains, that this kind of phenomena have arisen neither by clerical errors nor by a mere chance, but have something of a systematic nature, and he called the latter *Ultramarch Style* in contrast to the ordinary *March Style* of the Kalendar. Since then among the investigators has fixed the recognition, that in the Mediaeval Russia used two systems of year numbering in parallel, according to the character of the article described.

It is also known, that apart from *March Style* and *Ultramarch Style*, in Mediaeval Russia sometimes used also *Byzantine Style*. According to N. G. Bereztkov⁹⁾, until the 12th century both of the former two styles had been used in tandem, then came to be used, though sporadically, also *the Byzantine Style* of year numbering in the period between 12th and 13th century. Then about at the end of 15th century *Byzantine Style* has become predominant.

5 . Interrelation among different styles

There is still other system of defining New Year. According to this system New Year begins in January as we use it. Dionysius minor, who contrived the Christian Era of *Anno Domini* at the request of pope Johannes I (523-526), determined the beginning of a year in January in accordance with the reform of a legendary king of Rome Numa Pompilius.

Thus we have four systems or styles of Kalendar, and it is necessary to make clear the interrelationship among these systems.

Now, if we denote the *September Style* used in the Byzantine Empire as SS, the *March style* as MS, the *Ultramarch Style* as US, and *Dominical Style* as DS or BC/AD, the interrelationship of these styles will be given in the table 2 (here, $x=n-5508$).

Therefore, it comes out that the year of the passage including the Lazor's case in *The First Novgorodian Chronicle* cited above, is marked by US, because it is in the year 1207 that March 17 falls on Saturday (III/1, $6716-5509=1207$). cf. Table 3 and 4.

An image of this relation may be obtained from the example as follows.

5509	5510	5511	Sept.Style (SS)
5509	5510	5511	Ultra.Style (US)

Table 3

Hence, we have following formulae to get dominical year numbers.

5509	5510	5511
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Table 4

6 . Year numbering in each chronicle

Concerning the Kalka river incident it may be sufficient to examine year numbering of passages between 1220 and 1224 A.D. As to this point N. G. Bereztkov summarizes as following:

(1) **Laurentian Chronicle.** For 6714-6771 is basically used the March style except 6717, 6725, 6726 and 6740⁹⁾(*cf.*p.25).

(2) **Radzivil Chronicle.** He maintains, that in this chronicle there are two groups: the one, articles of 6619-6678, in which adopted in principle the March Style, and the other, that is, those of 6679-6714, rendered mainly by Ultramarch Style (Bereztkov, *ibid.* p.25.).

(3) **Synod Edition of the Novgorodian First Chronicle.** Among Russian chronicles, this edition most consistently uses the March Style and is the most reliable one in this respect with only a few exceptions. While for the articles before 13th century the March Style is applied exclusively, for the articles at the beginning of 13th century, namely those of 6714-6716, 6717-6919, 6731, 6732, the Ultramarch Style is used. After 6732, the Ultramarch Style is sporadically used also in the items of 6726, 6730, 6745, 6746, 6776-6780.

According to N. G. Bereztkov, an idea, unique as it was in 19th century, to fix the year of the Kalka river incident as 1222 was ventured by E. Bonnell on the material of Latvian Heinrig's *Livonian Chronicles*, dealing with the historical events from the end of the 13th century up to the 18th. This "fantastic" view of Bonnell's²¹⁾ ㄨ籐嗽罌叛苴勛ㄨ窠毛蚌仰

On the other hand, in *The Novgorodian First Chronicle* there are, apart from the invitation of Vsevolod (K31) already mentioned, articles about the unsuccessful expedition of Jurij (K3) to Kesi, who sent his brother Svyatoslav (K6) to aid Novgorodians against the enemy; about the Vsevolod's secret flight from Novgorod in winter under the cover of night. Novgorodians sent for Vsevolod's brother Yaroslav (K4) in place of him as the duke of Novgorod: Yaroslav's arrival is written at the top of the next year.

We have the same article in *Laurentian Chronicle* under the rubric of the year 6731. Taking into consideration temporal succession of these events and that Vsevolod's flight was in winter, it may be quite natural to think, that the Yaroslav's arrival was at the beginning of the year 6731. After these articles follows the article about the battle on the Kalka river.

In the Synod Edition of *The Novgorodian First Chronicle* under the rubric of 6731 we have an article as follows:

In this year passed away Mitrofan, archbishop of Novgorod, July 3rd, on the day of the memory of the holy martyr Hyacinthus (Уакинф), at the dawn of Monday.

If July 3rd falls on Monday, it must be in 1223 A.D., and, therefore, here is used the March Style. As we have mentioned, in the next year, in 6732, we are to meet with the narration of the Kalka river incident.

Articles belonging to the year 6733 do not carry any direct evidence as to the Style of Kalendar used. But under the rubric of the next 6734 year we have:

In this year passed away Sabatius (Сабатии), hegumen of St.Georgius monastery and archimandrite of Novgorod, on April 16th, on Maundy Thursday.

Before his demise he called together all of the Novgorodians and asked to elect next hegumen. They asked him who suits his heart, and according to his recommendation they appointed a Greek pope to this post.

... and they brought a Greek, very virtuous and pious man, tonsured him on the same day, on March 8th, in the memory of holy Theophilactus, thus making him hegumen.

Maundy Thursday is the Thursday before Pasch (Easter), and if March 8th falls on Maundy Thursday, it must be in the year 1226 A.D. On the other hand, March 8th falls on " Meeting " Sunday (соборное воскресенье *i.e.* the first Sunday of Lent) also in the same year. Hence we can conclude, that the March Style is used here.

The above examination makes clear, that chronicler(s) of these years consistently used the March Style.

7 . The appearance of Halley's comet

According to *Laurentian Chronicle*, in the year 6731, after the narration about the Kalka river incident, follows an article, telling of the appearance of a star in the west:

In the same year, a star appeared in the west, and though its light was not seen to the human eyes, in the evening after sunset two (columns of light) were seen rising upwards from the south: it (*sc.* the star) was far bigger in size than any other. It remained there for 7 days and after that the light from the star moved towards the east and remained there for four days until it disappeared.

This star is Halley's comet. N. G. Berezhtkov wrote in this connection as follows:

This "star" is Halley's comet, which appeared in Autumn 1222. Its passed perihelion September 15th. Therefore, this article (chronologically) belongs to the middle of 6730 by the March Style. That is, this article should have to belong to the rubric of a year earlier than it would actually belong to. The appearance of the comet is therefore nine months before the battle on the Kalka river. The reason why this article falls into the rubric of the year 6731, can be perhaps explained by the nature of the original source which uses the September or Ultramarch Style, from which it was excerpted and compiled by the chronicler. That is to say, the chronicler did not pay due attention to the difference of the Kalendar system of the source document, and was satisfied with simply (or rather *too naively*, as I would like to say --- I.Y.) transplanting it under the rubric which has the identical number of the year (*cf.* N. G. Berezhtkov, *op.cit.* p.107).

However, if we take into consideration the situation, that all of the articles before and after the passages dealing with the appearance of Halley's comet, N. G. Berezhtkov's argument seems to be less persuasive. Because it seems to be difficult to explain, why this topic was inserted not before, but after the narration of the Kalka river incident. It may be necessary to remark, that even such a seemingly trivial change in the heavens, for instance, as a partial eclipse of the Sun or the Moon, was met with sensation and awe on the part of people as an extremely bad omen to mankind. To add to these circumstances, it seems to be the habitual fashion of chroniclers to state first on the top of a rubric the appearance of omen in heaven and then a bad news (as if the omen foretold the disaster that follows).

On the other hand, as for the appearance of Halley's comet there exist plenty of records in the historical documents since antiquity, always stirring dread and horror among peoples. Even if this episode was originally rendered in the September Style or Ultramarch Style, as Berezhtkov maintains, why then the chronicler did not find in it an anachronism of such an evident and important incident as the appearance of Halley's comet?

From the strictly logical point of view, however, there seems to be another explanation, equally possible and perhaps more plausible than N. G. Berezhtkov's.

If not to stick to an *idée fixe* that the Kalka river incident must have occurred in 1223 A.D., we can surmise, that the narration, somehow numbered by the Ultramarch Style, was put into the passages elsewhere rendered by the March Style without the correction of the year numbering itself. In this case, however, it may become necessary to explain the reason, why the narration was inserted not after, but before the topic telling the appearance of the comet.

In our opinion, it may be more natural that in such cases the chronicler, well informed with the historical events, perhaps tried to arrange the passages not by the order of the year numbering, but according to the order of the actual occurrence of the events.

If this conjecture be true, the passages concerning the comet, originally put into proper place in the rubric of the year 6730, were shifted to the rubric of the next 6731, because it had not proper numbering of the year because it begins the passage merely with the words "in the same year" inserted and preceded by falsely numbered narration of the Kalka river incident.

All that the author wants to say by this argument is, that the year of the Kalka river incident cannot be, and yet has not been, incontestably fixed only on the ground of the materials, available from Russian Chronicles.

Thus, in sum, there still remains another possibility, that the incident occurred in the year 6730 MS, that is, in 1222 A.D.

However, for reason of space assigned to the author, together with the theme of the exact date of the incident he would like to defer the matter to some future occasion.

I am very grateful to my colleague Mrs Bettina Begole, lecturer of our university, who kindly revised my English and gave me useful suggestions.

NOTE

¹ *Yurij Юрний*, is a russified name of George, which corresponds to the Greek name of Georgios Γεωργιός.

² *Posadnik* was originally a native patrician of Novgorod the Great, appointed by the Grand Duke of Kievan Rus' to support the duke, who was usually the eldest son of the Grand Duke. Later, when the city acquired independence from the rule of Kievan Rus',

posadnik became to be elected by *veche*, a meeting composed of all the free citizens of the city just like *comitia centuriata* in the period of the Republican Rome. In accordance with its increasing degree of independence, the function of duke gradually became nominal, thus finally having become to be elected in *comitia*, although still from the members of Rurikids. He must abdicate from the throne, when “ they (*i.e. veche*) showed him the way ”. Thus, the city was legally personified, and began to act in the diplomatic affairs under the official title of “ Lord the Great Novgorod ” (Господин Великий Новгород).

³ The title for Virgin Mary esp. in the Eastern Church. (), means “ a woman who gives birth to the god ”.

24. Eiusdem (1915), Календарно-хронологиче

