

Battle of Kulikovo. On September 8, 1380, Rus' forces led by Grand Prince Dmitrii Ivanovich fought and defeated a mixed (including Tatar, Alan, Circassian, Genoese, and Rus') army led by the Emir Mamai on Kulikovo Pole (Snipe's Field) at the Nepriadva River, a tributary of the Don. As a result of the victory, Dmitrii received the sobriquet "Donskoi". Estimates of numbers who fought in the battle vary widely. Rus' chronicles place the number of those fighting on Dmitrii's side at between 150,000 and 400,000. One late chronicle places the number fighting on Mamai's side at 900,030. Historians have tended to downgrade these numbers, with estimates ranging from 30,000 to 240,000 for Dmitrii and 200,000 to 300,000 for Mamai.

The circumstances of the battle involved politics within the Qipchaq Khanate. Mamai attempted to oust Khan Tokhtamish, who had established himself in Sarai in 1378. In order to raise revenue, Mamai intended to require tribute payments from the Rus' princes. Dmitrii organized the Rus' princes to resist Mamai and, in effect, to support Tokhtamish. As part of his strategy, Mamai had attempted to coordinate his forces with those of the Grand Duke of Lithuania Jagailo, but the battle occurred before the Lithuanian forces arrived. After fighting most of the day, Mamai's forces left the field, presumably because he was defeated, but some historians think he did so to conserve his army to confront Tokhtamish. Dmitrii's forces remained at the scene of the battle for several days, and on the way back to Rus' were set upon by the Lithuania forces under Jagailo, which, too late to join up with Mamai's army, nonetheless managed to wreck havoc on the Rus' troops.

Although the numbers involved in the battle were immense, and although the battle led to the weakening of Mamai's army and its eventual defeat by Tokhtamish, the battle did not change the vassal status of the Rus' princes toward the Qipchaq khan. A cycle of literary works, including *Zadonshchina* and *Skazanie po Mamaevom poboishche*, devoted to ever more elaborate embroidering of the bravery of the Rus' forces has created a legendary aura about the battle.

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