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## СТАТЬИ НА АНГЛИЙСКОМ ЯЗЫКЕ

УДК 94(470)

## THE CUMAN CAMPAIGNS IN 1091

*Szilvia Kovács**(Hungarian Academy of Sciences (MTA) – University of Szeged (SZTE), Hungary)*

The Cumans appeared in Eastern Europe in the second half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century. In the first part of my study, I present a brief survey of the Cuman attacks against the Byzantine Empire until 1091. In 1091 they fought along the Byzantine Emperor Alexios I Komnénos (1081–1118) against the Pechenegs. In the battle of Lebunion, Alexios and his Cuman allies decisively defeated the Pechenegs. The Pechenegs defeated at the Battle of Lebunion lived at that time in the region Paristrion on Byzantine side of the Danube. In the same year, the Cumans attacked the Hungarian Kingdom as well.

The purpose of this study is to search for an answer to the three questions:

1. Who invited the Cumans into the Byzantine Empire?
2. What was the role of the Cumans in the battle of Lebunion in which the Byzantines achieved a great victory over the Pechenegs?
3. Could the Cumans be identical with the nomads who attacked the Hungarian Kingdom in the same year?

**Keywords:** Cuman attacks, Byzantine Empire, Hungarian Kingdom, 1091.

According to the written sources the Cumans appeared west of the Volga in 1054/1055 [69, p. 70, 208; 70, Vol. I. p. 162; 50, Vol. II. p. 151; 13, p. 143.]. Their European spreading is clearly traceable from the Old Russian sources. Soon after the conquest of the South Russian steppe, they appeared east of the Carpathian Mountains but they did not break into Moldova (Eastern Romania) and Wallachia (Muntenia, Țara Românească/Havasalföld), which were the western borderlands of the steppe, and where previous lords of the steppe, the fractions of the Pechenegs and the Uzes lived. According to the evidence of our sources, the Cuman groups did not move yet to these territories, although they may have kept the area under control since the end of the 11th century.

One of the most considerable powers of the age, the Byzantine Empire soon confronted the newly appeared nomad people of Turkic language. In this essay I examine the role of the Cumans in the Lower Danube region in connection with the Battle of Lebunion until 1091.

From the work of Attaleiates<sup>1</sup> we know that they launched the first attack against the empire in 1078, when it was just occupied with the fight against the

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<sup>1</sup> A native of Attalia, he was an important Byzantine statesman during the reign of emperors Romanos IV Diogenes (r. 1068–1071), Michael VII Dukas (r. 1071–1078) and Nikhephoros III Botaneiates (r. 1078–1081). He wrote his *Ἱστορία* (1079/1080) as an eyewitness and con-

pretender Nikephoros Basiliakos. At this time the Cumans allied with the Pechenegs and besieged Adrianopolis. After they had become aware of the Byzantine army's approaching, they retreated [40, p. 300–301].

According to Continuator of Skylitzes (Skylitzes Continuatus) Leon Diabatenos, the governor of Mesembria at this time was looking for the alliance with the Pechenegs and the Cumans, but we do not know about nomadic attacks against the Byzantine Empire [20, p. 67]. There was another Cuman attack according to the typicon of Bačkov Monastery (today Bulgaria) sometime between September and December in 1083 [62, p. 115–119; 26, p. 505–563]. From the *Alexias*, work of the Byzantine princess Anna Komnene<sup>2</sup>, who was one of the most important Byzantine authors of her age, we are informed that their next appearance in the land of the Byzantine Empire took place in 1087. This time the Cumans were again called by the Pechenegs<sup>3</sup>. The source says that the Pechenegs did not share the plunder with Cumans, who arrived too late for the Battle of Dristra (today Silistra in Bulgaria). As a result, the Cumans turned their weapons against their previous allies, and inflicted a terrible defeat upon them. The Pechenegs fled from the Cumans near a lake called Ozolimne<sup>4</sup>. However the Pechenegs escaped because the Cumans ran out of reserves. Since the Cumans were not yet aware of the power relations of the empire, they withdrew to the North of the Danube. According to Anna Komnene they intended to return then [2, p. 179; 52, p. 228–229; 49, p. 247–248].

The events at the Dristra and the Ozolimne eventuated conflict between the two Turkic peoples. The Pechenegs may have been aware of the Cumans' intention because after they had broken out from the squeeze of the Cumans they crossed over the Balkan Mountains and pitched camp to the south of the mountain between Goloe (today perhaps Lozarevo, Bulgaria) and Diampolis (Yambol, Bulgaria) near Markella [2, p. 180; 52, p. 230; 49, p. 249; 59, p. 348–349]<sup>5</sup>. In 1089, their pursuers

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temporary. This work is an account of Byzantine history from 1034 to 1079 [41, p. 93]. In this source appears for the first time the name of the Cumans as Κομάνων [42, Vol. II. p. 167; 40, p. 301].

<sup>2</sup> She was born in 1083 as the eldest daughter of the Byzantine emperor Alexios I Komnenos and Irene Doukaina. Because Emperor Alexios I had no rightful male heirs to inherit the throne, she was betrothed to Constantine Doukas, the son of Emperor Michael VII and they were co-emperors. But her fiancé died at infancy. However, in 1087 a blood heir was born. Anna married the Caesar Nikephoros Bryennios in 1094.

<sup>3</sup> Because at this time the Pecheneg army was narrowed at the town of Dristra by the Byzantine troops, their leader called Tatos turned for help to the Cumans [2, p. 173, 178; 52, p. 222, 228; 49, p. 240, 247].

<sup>4</sup> For the relation between the names of the lake (Οὐζλίμνη) and the ethnonym of Uzes (Οὐζοί) see [42, Vol. II. p. 128]. Localization of that lake is difficult. The place was located on the territory between the Danube to the Black Sea namely in the Dobrudja. Some researchers claimed that the lake is identical with Lake Razelm (Lacul Razim) or the flood-basin of Ialomița River or the Danube Delta (Delta Dunării) or aqueous territory round the Pliska [15, p. 121–129]. But Ljubarski thinks that the Ozolimne is identical with the delta of the Dnieper [66, p. 502, 773 n.]. However, there is one explanation of the lake's name as a literary component in the Anna Komnene's work [20, p. 81–84].

<sup>5</sup> Previously the Pechenegs lived on the territory between the Danube and Balkan Mountains in the Paristrion or Paradunavon (Παριστριών, Παραδουναβόν) region. It was the thema with the centre in Distra (today Silistra in Bulgaria). The thema's borders were the Balkan mountain range, the Black Sea and the Danube between Vidin and the Delta [38, p. 124; 39]. On

were already on Byzantine territory, and asked the Emperor Alexios I Komnenos (r. 1081–1118) permit them to cross the passes of the Balkan Mountains after the fled Pechenegs. However Alexios previously agreed with the Pechenegs, so after he gave presents to the Cumans, he dispatched them [2, p. 180; 52, p. 230; 49, p. 249].

Maybe the emperor was afraid that the Cumans were ready to enter into an alliance with the Pechenegs for booty. This fear was not groundless because the Cuman army appeared on the Byzantine territory from the earlier call of Pechenegs. It must be emphasized that these raids were not the separated Cuman excursions. The independent military campaigns of the Cumans began only in the 12th century. This presumption could be partially explained by the fact that the Cumans established their power in the territory of Moldova and Wallachia only at the end of the 11th century or the very beginning of the 12th century. They populated these regions in the first half of the 12th century [45, p. 34]<sup>6</sup>. On the other hand, the reason why they were raiding together with the Pechenegs could be that the latter held the territory between the Danube and Balkan Mountains in that time. In support of this hypothesis it could be mentioned that the Cumans led campaign without any support only in 1114<sup>7</sup>. In this year the role of Pechenegs was inconsiderable<sup>8</sup>. However, it seems that the emperor did not realize that the Cumans were ready to support both the Uzes and the Pechenegs to be rewarded by plundering. Fearing that the Pechenegs would conclude peace with the Cumans and the two armies might coalesce, the Emperor sent his man Synesios to the Pechenegs to treat with them. According to Anna Komnene, Alexios tried to enlist the aid of Pechenegs against the Cumans if the latter would cross the Danube again [2, p. 180; 52, p. 230; 49, p. 249–250].

The explanation of the emperor's rejection could be that he did not wish to replace an unpleasant but familiar from the military viewpoint enemy with a much stronger, more unpredictable and strategically less known one [56, p. 132; 55, p. 136]<sup>9</sup>. It is well-known that during the history of the Byzantine Empire, it often tried to solve the protection of its territory by diplomatic means and resorted to a

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the history of Paristrion see [4; 5; 6]. After 1087 the Pechenegs penetrated in Thrace, a province that until 1090 had been spared from their attacks.

<sup>6</sup> Regarding other opinions about the occupation of Moldova and Walachia by the Cumans see [65, p. 89–91].

<sup>7</sup> The Cumans pillaged again the territory of Byzantine Empire in the autumn of 1094. But this was not a separate campaign of the Cumans because they were backing a pretender, who claimed to be Leo, the son of Emperor Romanos Diogenes [2, p. 238–245; 52, p. 296–304; 49, p. 321–330; 25, p. 305–306].

<sup>8</sup> The Pechenegs were overwhelmed in the skirmishing battle at the Lebunion. According to Zonaras their survivors were settled in Moglena [25, p. 303–304] and in the future provided the Byzantine Empire with a body of light-armed cavalry. During the First Crusade the Pechenegs were ordered to follow the Crusaders and prevent their army from pillaging the countryside [48, p. 18–19]. In 1122 there was another Pecheneg attack. Perhaps at this time the nomads came from the territory controlled by the Cumans. They were again defeated by the Byzantines at the battle of Beroe in 1122, on the territory of modern day Bulgaria [7, p. 90].

<sup>9</sup> But according to Diaconu, Alexios I was afraid that the Cumans would try to recompense the Byzantine Empire's abundance by making peace with the Pechenegs aimed at attacking together the Byzantines again [14, p. 39].

fight in the final case only<sup>10</sup>. But around 1087, the Byzantine Empire was no longer able to prevent the Pechenegs' raids already lasting more than forty years, neither with the use of diplomacy or with fight<sup>11</sup>. Theoretically, the emperor might have come nearer to the Pechenegs simply because the Cumans were unknown yet for the Byzantine strategy and diplomacy.

Two years later this situation changed<sup>12</sup>. In 1091 the empire, which was declining continually after the death of Basileios II in 1025, fell into a situation in which the help provided by the "barbarian" Cumans saved Constantinople surrounded by land and sea. The great Battle of Lebnion took place on April 29, 1091, in which Alexios I Komnenos overcame the Pechenegs with the help of the Cumans. Anna Komnene carefully describes the events of the battle. Actually it emerges from this source how huge a stake the battle was, although Anna Komnene naturally does not emphasize this. We know however, that Alexios, who was claiming the imperial throne as a pretender in 1081, rose to the head of a dying empire. The first ten years of his reign was spent in a continuous war with different enemies of the empire. The Byzantine army, which the official aristocracy totally destroyed because of their fear of the soldier emperors, hardly reached a few successes in these wars. Therefore, we connect the result of the Battle of Manzikert in 1071, in which the Emperor Roman IV Diogenes was captured by the Seljuks, not with treason, but rather with miserable state of the Byzantine army. So it is understandable that one of Alexios I Komnenos most important reforms focused on the army. Earlier the army was recruited from peasants, now they were replaced with foreign (Rus', Bulgarian, Pecheneg, Turk, Alan, Frank, British, German) mercenaries [44, p. 325]<sup>13</sup>. At the beginning of his rule, Alexios was in lack of disciplined soldiers with military experience<sup>14</sup>. This may be an explanation for why the Emperor insisted on recruiting mercenaries of foreign origin and asked for Cuman help in the battle of Lebnion.

Although the majority of the Byzantologists mention the events of the Battle of Lebnion in connection with Alexios I Komnenos, except for a few, they do not

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<sup>10</sup> The avoidance of battle was always a cardinal principle of Byzantine strategy, which is found in the early strategy works and which is repeated by the later sources [60, p. 196–197; 23, p. 37–38; 200; 27, p. 3].

<sup>11</sup> About the relation between the Byzantines and the Pechenegs see Vasil'evskij [64] and Gyóni [20], a recent monograph by Diaconu [15], a good synopsis in French Malamut [39], on the religion of the Pechenegs a good overview in Hungarian Balogh [3].

<sup>12</sup> Many Byzantologists think the empire faced a period of great difficulty with the death of the successful soldier-emperor Basil II in 1025 [30, p. 185–187; 50, p. 52; 44, p. 287; 11, p. 126–131]. A partial recovery was made possible due to the efforts of the Komnenian dynasty. This is sometimes referred to as the Komnennian restoration [30, p. 202; 9, p. 300; 50, p. 54–61; 44, p. 315].

<sup>13</sup> In the Alexios' army not only soldiers, but also strategists were foreign mercenaries [10, p. 360].

<sup>14</sup> The works of his daughter and son-in-law reflect that in this period Alexios felt contempt for indiscipline and cowardice of the Byzantine soldiers caused by lack of military experience [53, p. 102]. About the deplorable condition the imperial army at the beginning of the rule of Alexios I Komnenos see [7, p. 56]. As Price mentioned: "The Byzantines did not use war as an excuse to seek personal fame and glory. Battle was only one of many ways to achieve the goals of the empire. They much preferred to use diplomacy, trickery, and inducements – with battle only as a last resort" [47, p. 43].

ascribe special significance to the participation of the Cumans in the battle [43, p. 27; 44, p. 318]<sup>15</sup>, though it is obvious that the Cumans fighting in the emperor's army can be considered as the saviours of the empire. Since by this time the Byzantines were not only expelled from the Anatolian peninsula by the Seljuks, but Tzachas, the emir of Smyrna made an alliance with the Pechenegs threatening the imperial capital itself<sup>16</sup>. During the turn of 1090/1091 Tzachas interlocked Constantinople from the sea, while the Pechenegs did the same from the land, which "lived through a most troublesome winter" [44, p. 324]<sup>17</sup>.

When the emperor was informed about the alliance between Tzachas and the Pechenegs, he occupied strategically advantageous place at Ainos (today Enez, Turkey), south of the estuary of the river Marica [58, p. 170–173]. Alexios' aim was to impede Tzachas' cooperation with the Pechenegs but his plans were changed by the appearance of the Cumans [1, p. 110]. From Ainos the emperor moved with his army to Choirenoi<sup>18</sup> and there he made camp in a territory which was protected by the river and a swamp. Alexios went from there to Ainos with a light-army to repulse the Pechenegs. At the town he got to know of the approach of an immense Pecheneg army to the Byzantine camp at Choirenoi. The emperor embarked and returned to his army. According to his daughter "As he saw that his own forces were infinitely smaller than the Scythians he fell into great perplexity and fear, for as far as man could see, he had no one to help him" [2, p. 200; 52, p. 252–253; 49, p. 272–274]. Since Tzachas was late, the emperor turned against the Pechenegs. First Alexios heard of the arrival of the numerous Pecheneg army together with their families, then four days later, according to our exaggerating source, he heard of the arrival of forty thousand Cumans.

There is an interesting question: who called the Cumans? In this context, there are three different hypotheses. According to the first the Pechenegs asked for help by the Cumans [22, p. 935]. This may be indicated that the emperor and the Byzantines were mistrustful in the Cumans all time during the battle. Anna constantly asserts that his father was desperately afraid that the Cumans might decide to join forces with the Pechenegs<sup>19</sup>. The emperor's fear was not unfounded because the Cumans and the Pechenegs fought against the Byzantine Empire on the Balkan Peninsula earlier. However, as mentioned above, events that occurred at Ozolimne and Markella rather suggest deterioration of relationship between the two nomadic

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<sup>15</sup> For example Stephenson writes about this battle as a "magnificent victory for the imperial forces" and he does not mention the Cumans [58, p. 103].

<sup>16</sup> Tzachas lived as a hostage in the court of the emperor Nikephoros III Botaneiates. He returned in Asia Minor when Alexios became emperor. Here he obtained Smyrna (modern İzmir) and other cities, constructed a fleet and was systematically seizing control over the Aegean islands [63; 61, p. 358]. Apparently he wanted to gain power and influence in the region. Under the terms of the alliance, Tzachas wanted the Pechenegs to seize Gallipoli. If the Pechenegs had succeeded in doing so, communication between Constantinople and the Aegean would be interrupted [1, p. 110].

<sup>17</sup> The Byzantines not only felt the pressure of the enemy, but suffered by an exceptionally severe winter. According to Anna Komnene's account even the doors of houses could not be opened due the high snow [2, p. 199; 52, p. 252; 49, p. 273].

<sup>18</sup> It is a place on the right bank of the Lower Marica, near Enez. Exact location is unknown [59, p. 230].

<sup>19</sup> The Pechenegs made several attempts to bring the Cumans to their side and they tried to negotiate with the emperor as well [2, p. 204; 52, p. 256; 49, p. 279].

peoples. This hypothesis is weakened by the fact that the Cumans supported the Byzantine army in the battle and the Cumans urged to struggle the hesitating emperor.

It is widespread opinion that Alexios himself requested the support of the Cumans. The emperor's precarious situation is well known. This explains that several Byzantologists presupposes that Alexios himself had recourse to the Cumans [9, p. 309; 44, p. 318; 53, p. 83; 63]. However, there is no evidence to support this hypothesis. I must be along with Angold on that point. According to him, the Cumans' "appearance had nothing to do with diplomatic sleight of hand" [1, p. 111]. There are some arguments against that the Cumans had come at the emperor's beckoning. As previously mentioned, Alexios took alarm when he saw the Cumans because he feared that they might become his foes. The emperor concluded that it would have been a fatal disaster for his Byzantine army had the Cumans and the Pechenegs entered into an alliance against him [2, p. 200; 52, p. 253; 49, p. 274]. So Alexios was not reliant on the unexpectedly and uninvited support. But he was an exceptional diplomat, whereupon he decided to make the Cumans his ally. Alexios invited the chiefs of the Cuman army, who had been named in the Alexiad. Even Togortak and Maniak accepted the invitation, however it must be mentioned that Maniak refused at first [2, p. 200; 52, p. 254; 49, p. 274–275]. This is the second argument against this hypothesis. There is a third reason in favour that it was not the emperor who asked for help from the Cumans. We know from Anna's descriptions that after Alexios arrived at an agreement with the Cumans, he postponed the fight for some days with the Pechenegs, because he waited for his men to arrive with armies recruited from the local population. Finally he decided to start the struggle only under the pressure of the Cumans [2, p. 202; 52, p. 256; 49, p. 277]. The emperor ordered one of his men to build a bridge and moved his army on the other bank of the river Marica and there they had trenches drawn from "the Cumans' secret plans" [2, p. 201; 52, p. 254; 49, p. 275]. This fact could be further evidence of Alexios' fear from the Cumans.

I think these prove that Alexios would have liked to avoid taking the Cumans into a clash, because he did not trust them. Naturally it is not possible to completely exclude the next opportunity why Anna doesn't mention that Alexios called the Cumans, because she wished to emphasize her father's diplomatic cleverness. According to Anna's story, the emperor realized that he is unable to fight against the Pechenegs with his slight army; he perceived the opportunity in the unexpectedly appearing Cumans to reverse the situation which seemed to be hopeless [2, p. 200; 52, p. 253; 49, p. 274].

When the leader of the Cumans accepted the emperor's invitation he had arranged a feast in their honour and they entered into an alliance whereby the Cumans swore an oath to help the Byzantines and left hostages as their guarantee. Alexios agreed to leave all the plunder to the Cumans if they won [2, p. 200–201; 52, p. 254; 49, p. 274–275].

The invitation to the feast as well as the feast after their victory demonstrates how much the Emperor was depending on the support of the Cumans<sup>20</sup>. According to Anna Komnene her father nearly "flattered" the Cumans on the repast before the

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<sup>20</sup> Alexios preferred a personal and direct negotiation; otherwise he rather not used to rely on mediators and palace ceremonies in his diplomacy [53, p. 92–96].

battle. Whereas our source is not explicit, but suggests that the emperor partook of a feast with the Cumans two times, before and after the victory [2, p. 200, 206 ; 52, p. 264, 260–261; 49, p. 275, 282; 53, p. 92]. We can only perceive the importance of Alexios' actions by comparison to descriptions from the *Antapodosis* by Liutprand of Cremona. He wrote in one of his reports of his mission to Constantinople that the Emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos who was sitting up at the height of the ceiling would not talk to him personally but by one of his logothete. We read from Anna's work that the emperor himself was almost smarmy with the Cumans at the feast before the battle. Or, if we look back at what our source suggests, Alexios had a meal with the Cumans on two occasions whereas the ruler of Kiev, Olga was only worthy of a dessert at the court of Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos [12, Vol. II. 15. 594–598]. Alexios had been an excellent follower of "the Purple-born" as he adopted the primary advice of his tutor of "divide and conquer" when he relied on the support of another nomadic tribe by entering into an alliance against the Pechenegs [53, p. 83].

### The Battle of Lebunion

The battle, which concluded in the flawless victory of the army of the emperor strengthened by the Cumans, took place at Mount Lebunion low down the river Marica about 12 kilometres from Enez a port town at the Aegean Sea<sup>21</sup>. The imperial army and the Cumans turning north clashed with the Pechenegs. Unfortunately Anna Komnene's description is not clear about her father's army. The emperor usually divided it into three parts. In this battle the right, eastern wing was commanded by George Palaiologos, and the left, western wing by Constantine Dalassenos. According to Anna Komnene, the Byzantine infantry was posted in the centre, and the cavalry on the wings, but she regrettably does not provide further details about the exact placement of the Cumans. About the Cuman army she does make clear that to the right from them was Monastras<sup>22</sup> with his men, while to the left of them stood Uzas<sup>23</sup> and towards the west was Hubertopoulos with the Franks [2, p. 203; 52, p. 257; 49, p. 278]<sup>24</sup>. In other words, according to Anna's description the emperor placed the "easily-led nature" Cumans between his best commanders' units. The Byzantines and Cuman army almost certainly outnumbered the Pechenegs<sup>25</sup>.

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<sup>21</sup> First the emperor tried to place his army on a hill which dominates the plain, but this place was not enough, so in the bottom of the hill he made dig a ditch and built a camp for his warriors [2, p. 202; 52, p. 255; 49, p. 276].

<sup>22</sup> Monastras was a semi barbarian soldier, maybe of Cuman descent [42, Vol. II. p. 192; 54, p. 213–215].

<sup>23</sup> He was plausibly of Uz birth [20, p. 66–67; 42, Vol. II. p. 228].

<sup>24</sup> Konstantinos Humbertopoulos, 'Humbert's son' was a Norman mercenary of the emperor [49, p. 79; 54, p. 68–71].

<sup>25</sup> We know neither the number of imperial nor of the Pecheneg army. Anna Komnene writes only about the army of her father who called five hundred Franks from Nikomedia. She also asserts that the day before the battle five thousand mountain people arrived in his camp [2, p. 203; 52, p. 256; 49, p. 277]. Anna reports that the Cumans numbered forty thousand, but she exaggerates. With the Cumans often relates the number of forty thousand. The Cumans arrived at the territory of the Georgian Kingdom were forty thousand. The same number was used to describe the size of the Cuman population entering in Hungary. On the bases of sources some historians try to reconstruct the number of the Cuman population [68, p. 114–115]. However the

The Pecheneg army used their covered wagons as a wall, but they were caught in the semi-circle of the imperial and Cuman forces. Thanks to this manoeuvre their fighting line was broken.

The strategic and tactical military abilities of Alexios I Komnenos have been much discussed among Byzantinists, but in this battle he demonstrated his skill of general and military prowess. According to his daughter, Alexios observed when a Pecheneg leader approached to the Cumans in the battle. This chief hoped that the Cumans “as they spoke the same language” could be as mediators for him. Alexios was afraid that the Cumans make a common cause with the Pechenegs and turned against his army. In order to prevent a rapprochement between the two nomadic peoples the emperor posted himself with imperial flag in front of the Cuman line. Alexios also looked after his soldiers. During the battle, which lasted from dawn to afternoon, he ordered to the local population to bring water to the fighters at mid-day [2, p. 204; 52, p. 257–258; 49, p. 278–279.]. The Pechenegs were not only defeated in the battle, but the Byzantines massacred their Pecheneg captives, between them women and children. Naturally they were not annihilated, albeit Anna claims “just by one day the Scythians missed seeing the month of May” [2, p. 205; 52, p. 258; 49, p. 280].

It is important to mention that according to Anna the Cuman army was not commanded as a unit. On the night of April 29th the Pecheneg captives were slaughtered following the battle. Some of the Cumans were afraid that their ally was meditating some dreadful strike against them, so they went away [2, p. 206; 52, p. 260; 49, p. 281]. This fear was not unreasonable because the Byzantines were extremely alarmed by the Cumans dubious and precarious behaviour at Lebunion and this was an ideal opportunity to get even quickly with the Cumans.

When the Emperor heard of the Cumans’ flight he had all the goods which he had assigned to them according to their agreement and sent off after them. For all the other Cumans who followed him, he saw to it how they feasted royally after the battle. A few days later Alexios gave them gifts and dismissed them. He reflected that they might wander about and turn to plundering on their way and inflict harm on the country towns along the road, so he took hostages from them. He also gave them a man and entrusted him with the care and safe conveyance of the Cumans as far as the Balkan Mountains [2, p. 206–207; 52, p. 260–261; 49, p. 281–282].

### **The Cumans’ attacks against the Hungarian Kingdom in 1091**

We know from Hungarian sources that in the summer of this same year Cumans attacked the Hungarian Kingdom twice. The first incursion reached the eastern part of the Hungarian Kingdom, Transylvania and the area between the rivers Danube and Tisza [51, Vol. I. p. 412–414]<sup>26</sup>. Four possible reasons are known, the first the Cumans were sent by the Byzantine Emperor who was alarmed by the Croatian success of the Hungarian King Saint Ladislaus I (r. 1077–1095) in the spring of 1091. According to this hypothesis Alexios wanted them to be stopped before they reached the Byzantine territory of Dalmatia [16, p. 12–17; 22, p. 935;

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figures of twenty, forty and eighty thousand strong army are *topoi* used by late antique authors when describing the “barbarian armies” [18, 213–214].

<sup>26</sup> According to two excellent Hungarian medievalists this second attack could be dated in 1092 [21, p. 560; 22, p. 938; 35, p. 22; 34, p. 23; 33, p. 112–113].

21, p. 559]<sup>27</sup>. The second is that the Rus' suzerain of Terebovl persuaded the Cumans to attack Hungarian territory [17, p.136; 31, p. 68–69; 33, p. 115–116; 29, p. 22; 28, p. 67; 55, p. 235]<sup>28</sup>. The third reason is that this campaign was not part of the Cuman herds of Togortak and Maniak who were fighting in Byzantine territory [65, p. 101–102; 35, p. 22; 36, p. 10]. Finally, the Cumans returning from the battle of Leunion were plundering in the Hungarian Kingdom [45, p. 31; 64, p. 106].

Although the first assumption could be true, it is very unlikely. Our most trustworthy source of the time does not mention any arrangements between Alexios and the Cumans concerning this event. Anna Komnene does not cover up any of her father's intrigues. For example, she writes about the assassination of the above mentioned emir of Smirna, Tzachas. Alexios manipulated Kildij Arslan to carry out the assassination [2, p. 220; 52, p. 274–275; 49, p. 299–300].

The second explanation relies on the *Illuminated Chronicle* (*Chronicon Pictum*), as the source says that (Saint) Ladislaus I “the glorious king attacked Ruscia, because the Cumans approached Hungaria following their [i.e. Rus'] advice”, after the victory over the Cumans [51, Vol. I. p. 414]. Data from the Russian Primary Chronicle (*Повесть временных лет*) have been linked to this explanation, as the suzerain of Terebovl<sup>29</sup> marched against the Polish with the Cumans as his allies in 1092 [69 p. 91, 229; 70, Vol. I. p. 215, Vol. II. p. 206; 13, p. 174]. Although our source does not say that Vasil'ko of Terebovl led the Cumans against the Hungarians, it confirms that the suzerain entered into an alliance with nomadic tribes. The *Illuminated Chronicle* is the only written proof of the reason of the Cumans' attack. But what was the suzerain of Terebovl's aim, when he sent the Cumans against the Hungarian Kingdom? Namely, on the one hand, apart from this Hungarian campaign the relation between the princes of Rus' and the Hungarian Kingdom was good in this period [17, p. 133–136; 33, p. 116; 67, p. 52–53]. On the other hand, there were problems on the Polish–Rus' borderland, since the frontier between the two territories were bounded in this time, i.e. the turn of the centuries 11th and 12th. Finally, according to the Russian Primary Chronicle and Matthias Miechowita [19, Vol. II. p. 1596], the prince of Terebovl with the Cumans led a campaign against the Poles and not against the Hungarian Kingdom.

Researchers belonging to the third group explain the campaign as a separate attack aimed at gaining of Transylvanian territory or at simple plundering [65, p. 101–102; 35, p. 22; 36, p. 10]. The problem with the assumption of gaining Transylvanian territory is that the Cumans had not yet expanded their authority as far as the nearby area of Transylvania in the last decades of the 11th century. They must have had the furthest western part of their populated area in Transnistria, now known as the eastern part of Moldova (today Republic of Moldova)<sup>30</sup> Most certainly they had plundered further west. This might not rule out completely the theory of a separate attack from the Byzantine campaign, we must emphasize the possibility of plundering. More to the point is that the independence of the Rus' Princi-

<sup>27</sup> For historians who have the same opinion see l. 35, p. 22; 36, p. 10.

<sup>28</sup> The second battle which was dated in 1092 by some historians, used to be linked to the prince of Terebovl [22, p. 938–938]. According to Makk the second Cuman attack could be connected to the restoration of the Byzantine rule in the North Balkans [34, p. 23; 33, p. 112–113].

<sup>29</sup> Today is a small town in the Ukrainian Ternopil's'ka oblast'.

<sup>30</sup> That is proved by the archaeological finds and the written sources too [74; 68].

palities, which had been under attack from the Cumans most times, was not threatened by nomadic tribes.

The most believable explanation is the fourth theory of the attack being carried out by the plundering Cumans returning from the battle of Leburnion. First, according to the descriptions of the *Illuminated Chronicle*, the Cuman army “went to Byhor wreaking havoc through the land of Transylvania” [51, Vol. I. p. 412]. As Pauler wrote the attack must have come from south or south-east, otherwise the Cumans could have “swept through” Transylvania towards Bihar (county in northwest Romania) by approaching from north [46, p. 448]<sup>31</sup>. According to the chronicle the Cumans had crossed the river Tisza at Tokaj after Bihar, plundered between the rivers Danube and Tisza, split into three groups, then decided to return home at Becse (Bečej, Serbia). Not far from here King Ladislaus defeated the Cumans led by Copulch in the battle beside the stream Poganis, which runs into the river Temes (Timiș). Our source says that the Cumans wanting to take revenge proclaimed war against the Hungarian king. But the war ended at the river Danube with the victory of the Hungarians, where the Cuman leader, Akus was stabbed by the king himself [51, Vol. I. p. 412–414].

In the secondary literature we can read different opinions about the reason and date of the second campaign. There is a widespread opinion among historians that this second attack of the Cumans, whose aim was to avenge the first fight occurred in 1092 [21, p. 560; 23, p. 938; 34, p. 23; 33, p. 112–113; 67, p. 53]. This view is based on the *Illuminated Chronicle*’s observation, namely the Cumans attacked the Hungarians on the encouragement of Rus’ [51, Vol. I. p. 414]. This remark is associated with the following sentence of the *Russian Primary Chronicle* “In this year the Polovcians [i.e. the Cumans] attacked the Poles with Vasil’ko son of Rostislav” [69, p. 91, 229; 70, Vol. I. p. 215, Vol. II, 206; 13, p. 174]. However, on the basis of the *Illuminated Chronicle* it could not be exactly dated<sup>32</sup>.

According to some historians this second campaign of the Cumans could be connected to the Cumans who made alliance with the Byzantine emperor, Alexios I Komnenos [33, p. 112–113]. Others think the Rus’ intrigue was in the background of this attack [22, p. 938–938]. But in my opinion, István Kapitánffy is right when he says that chapter 137 of the *Illuminated Chronicle* explains explicitly the aim of the second attack [28, p. 67]. Namely the Cumans took oath to revenge for Copulch and sent envoy to the Hungarian King and gave a message about the day when they

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<sup>31</sup> This first attack according to some historians reached to the Hungarian territories through Oituz Pass (Ojtozi-szoros) [8, p. 232; 22, p. 936]. Similarly, Spinei suggests that the Cumans came from southern part of Moldova and they crossed a mountain pass of the Eastern Carpathians [57, p. 74]. The coin treasures found in Romanian Turda, Frata and Sântandrei indicate the direction of Copulch’s attack. Among these coins were coins of Alexios I Komnenos and Ladislau I [8, p. 232]. However these coin treasures do not attest that the Cumans crossed the Carpathian Mountains by Oituz. Namely, if they crossed the Southern Carpathians by Turnu Roșu Pass (Vöröstoronyi-szoros) or Bran Pass (Törösvári-hágó), the places above mentioned could be on the way. According to Rasovskij the Pecheneg attacked to Hungarians through the Southern Carpathians [71, p. 4].

<sup>32</sup> Makk dates the second Cuman attack in 1092 because he supposes the emperor did not want to enter into a third war in 1091. The fights in Paristrion and Dalmatia encumbered his army. So, according to Makk, Alexios wanted to attack the Hungarian Kingdom with his Cuman allies in 1092 [34, p. 23].

will attack his country [51, Vol. I. p. 414]. Consequently the reason of the second campaign was the defeat of Copulch's army and its intention was vengeance.

According to the sources I presume that the Hungarian Kingdom was attacked by those Cumans who left the territory of Byzantine Empire in the spring of 1091. When they arrived at the territory north of the Danube, which was rich in pasture, they remained there. From there one part of them led the first campaign to the Hungarian territory, while another part of them stood at the Lower Danube<sup>33</sup>. Then here, somewhere at the region of the Lower Danube, the remaining Cumans received the news of Copulch's defeat and his death and from here Akus started the second expedition.

The second battle could have been fought in August 1091 around Orşova. This fourth hypothesis is proved by the fact that the battle was near the river Danube not long after the first battle. The revengeful second Cuman army could not have arrived from the South Russian steppe in such a short time. Namely the Illuminated Chronicle tells the Cumans informed the time when they would attack the Hungarian Kingdom and King Ladislaus came to meet them to prevent their havoc [51, Vol. I. p. 414]. In my opinion this story of the chronicle supports that the Cumans did not arrive from the South Russian steppe. In addition, according to the chronicle it is likely that the Hungarian King did not depart far-away from the location of the first battle "Cumque rex audisset, subrisit, et diem quam in Hungariam venire proposuerant, rex obviam illis equitavit timens depopulationem Hungarie. Et quodam Sabbato sumpmo mane prope Danubium impetum super Cunos [i.e. Cumans] fecit" [51, Vol. I. p. 414]. Moreover why did the battle take place beside the river Danube if the attackers come from the South Russian steppe? If the Cuman army had been approaching from east, geographically Moldova or Transylvania would have been a better choice of battle ground for coming through the eastern or south-eastern pass of the Carpathian Mountains. But the battle was occurred near the river Danube. If we accept Pauler's point, the second battle had been near Orşova.

In my opinion other sources prove that the Cumans did not lead separate great campaigns into two different directions in the same year<sup>34</sup>. The Old Russian sources do not mention any separate greater Cuman attacks against the Rus' in the years of the Byzantine attacks of 1091, 1094, 1114 or 1148. Another proof of the attacking Cumans being the nomads, who left the Byzantine Empire, is one of the statements of Anna Komnene. According to this statement, Ladislaus defeated the Cumans who were still making temporary settlements beside the lower part of the river Danube. She writes that the Emperor was notified of the Cumans crossing over the river Danube again in the summer of 1091, before sending his Norman mercenaries to Dalmatia [2, p. 207; 52, p. 262; 49, p. 283]. Therefore, the Cumans

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<sup>33</sup> As I wrote above, according to Knjazkij the Cumans who attacked the Hungarian Kingdom could not be the same who left the Byzantine Empire. One of his arguments for this is worded as follows: the Cumans could not do a large distance mentioned by the chronicle with booties from the Byzantines in such a short time [65, p. 102]. However, I supposed that only a part of the Cuman army raided on the Hungarian territories. Another part of them with spoils remained at the Lower Danube.

<sup>34</sup> This attack to the Hungarian Kingdom could not be small, since the plundering Cumans were divided in three parts. On the basis of their devastation described in the chronicle, their expedition might be a large-scale.

leaving the empire were still in the area of the Lower Danube. So, the seeking revenge Cuman army also clashed with the Hungarian King in the summer of 1091.

To summarize, I would like to draw your attention to a few main points: First we can state that the Cumans' first five approaches of the Byzantine Empire can be linked to the Pechenegs. In the first approaches the Cumans were allies of them and after the event in 1087 they became enemies. On the next occasions the Cumans moved against the Pechenegs on the Balkan Peninsula.

Secondly, according to Norwich the Byzantine army achieved the most glorious victory since Basileos II in the battle of Lebunion in 1091 with the help of the Cumans [43, p. 27]. Due to this victory the Empire was freed from the Pechenegs' threat by 1123 holding over them for the last forty years. Uspenskij writes that in the winter of 1090/1091 the situation of the Byzantine Empire was comparable to that during the Turkish occupation in 1453, when Constantinople was surrounded by the Turks [73]. Byzantine Empire came out victorious from this situation thanks to the Cumans. With this victory the Byzantines were not threatened any more by the Pechenegs<sup>35</sup>.

Thirdly, we can assume that the attack against the Hungarian Kingdom was not carried out as separate plundering of the Cumans returning from the battle of Lebunion. We must emphasize that the alliance between the Cumans and Byzantium changed after this battle. Although according to our source the Cumans fought in the Byzantine army as mercenaries, they considered the Byzantine Empire as a target for plundering just as the Rus'.

Finally I would like to point out that the Cumans populated only over the area east of the river Dniester in the 11th century. In my opinion this is proven by the fact that the Cumans arrived by the invitation of the Pechenegs on the first two occasions. Pechenegs and Uzes, settled north and further east of the river Danube, gradually got under the authority of the Cumans.

The two leaders of the Cumans mentioned in connection with the battle in 1091 are well-known from the Russian Primary Chronicle. In the Old Russian sources Maniak is mentioned as Воняк (Боняк), Тогортак as Тугоркан (Тугоркан). Both led plundering attacks towards the area of Rus'. As a consequence, it is more likely that their settlements were on the south Russian steppe, east of the river Dniester in the neighbouring area of the Rus', not on the Lower Danube<sup>36</sup>.

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<sup>35</sup> Soon after the Battle of Lebunion the emperor made effort to restore the order in Paristrion [32, p. 51; 58, p. 103].

<sup>36</sup> According to Spinei Tugorkan's Cumans arrived from the Dnieper region in the Byzantine Empire [55, p. 235]. Rasovskij thought that the Cumans' permanent presence at Lower-Danube is not reported up to the middle of 12th century [72, p. 158].

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## КУМАНСКИЕ КАМПАНИИ 1091 г.

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Куманы появились в Восточной Европе во второй половине XI в. В первой части моего исследования я представляю краткий обзор нападений куманов на Византийскую империю до 1091 г. В 1091 г. куманы сражались вместе с византийским императором Алексием I Комнином (1081–1118) против печенегов. В битве при Левунионе Алексий и его куманские союзники одержали решающую победу над печенегами. Печенеги, побежденные в битве при Левунионе, жили в то время в регионе Паристрион, на византийской стороне Дуная. В том же году куманы также напали и на Венгерское королевство.

Целью данного исследования является поиск ответов на три вопроса:

1. Кто пригласил куманов в Византийскую империю?
2. Какова была роль куманов в битве при Левунионе, в которой византийцы добились решающей победы над печенегами?
3. Могли ли быть эти куманы теми кочевниками, которые напали на Венгерское королевство в том же году?

**Ключевые слова:** Нападения куманов, Византийская империя, Венгерское королевство, 1091 г.

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