

KIPCHAKS THROUGH THE EYES OF CONTEMPORARIES: EASTERN AND EUROPEAN TEXTUAL SOURCES¹

*Lala Aghamirze Aliyeva**

*Yaroslav B. Pylypchuk***

*Leri Tavadze****

10.52846/AUCSI.2024.2.02

Abstract

The Kipchaks, one of the nomadic Turkic tribes of Eurasia, left their mark on the history of many peoples from Central Asia to Europe, from the Caucasus to North Africa. Their Encounter with a number of medieval countries and the role, played in the crucial historical events of the world, led to be mentioned, and discussed by the various authors in different languages. Against the backdrop of many political events in which the Kipchaks played one role or another, these sources report on their customs, the peculiarities of their physical anthropology, their beliefs and military tradition, and etc. This research conducts a comparative analysis of textual sources, works of medieval Armenian, Georgian, European, Arabic and Persian authors. In order to scrutinize the ethno-linguistic and cultural features of the Kipchaks prior to the Mongol occupation of Kipchak lands, based on medieval textual data, this paper sets the task of drawing out the real image of the Kipchaks, veiled by the harsh military and political events of the period under study.

Key words: *Kipchaks, Armenian chronicles, Kartlis Tskhovreba, Muslim authors, Slavic chronicles, Medieval European sources.*

Introduction

The Kipchaks in medieval times inhabited a vast area of the Eurasian Steppe. The area of their inhabited territory spanned from the Hungarian plains to the Siberian taiga. The large territorial expansion made them famous among different sedentary people of Europe, Middle East, Caucasia, and Central Asia. Despite the fact that we almost have no medieval Kipchak textual sources prior to the Mongol occupation of Kipchak lands, the accounts about this nomadic people have survived in a multitude of languages, especially among those people who frequently interacted, traded, or engaged in warfare

¹The work on the article was divided as follows: Lala A. Aliyeva researched accounts of medieval Muslim authors; Yaroslav B. Pylypchuk investigated medieval Slavic, Byzantine and Latin sources; Leri Tavadze studied medieval Georgian and Armenian authors about Kipchaks;

*Associate Professor, PhD in History, Baku State University, Faculty of History, 23 Z. Khalilov Street, 1148 Baku, Azerbaijan; +994773398189; lalaaliyeva@bsu.edu.az

**Doctor of Historical Sciences, Ukrainian State University of M. Dragomanov, Pyrohova St, 9, Kyiv, Ukraine; +380988446537; pylypchuk.yaroslav@gmail.com

***Associate Professor, PhD in History, Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, 1 Ilia Chavchavadze Avenue, Tbilisi 0179 Georgia; +995322225107 leri.tavadze@tsu.ge;

with them. Their narrative presents a unique tale about fascinating people who influenced Afro-Eurasia in many different aspects.

While historical records often portray medieval nomadic tribes as primarily engaged in warfare and violence, this research seeks to challenge that one-dimensional view. By delving into the Kipchaks' culture, religious beliefs, daily life, and physical characteristics, we aim to present a more nuanced understanding of their way of life.

This study, based on data from the textual sources of middle ages, highlights first-hand evidence, with the goal of not distorting the perceptions of medieval European and Middle Eastern authors on the Kipchaks. To gain a comprehensive understanding of the Kipchaks, this study draws upon a wide range of primary sources from Arabic, Persian, East Slavic, Byzantine, Georgian, Armenian and Latin-language European chronicles.

In accordance with the stated goal and objectives of the study, its database consists of chronicles and treatises of authors of vast geography. The extend of geography is primarily due to the nomadic way of life of the Kipchaks, as they were in contact with the peoples of Europe, the Caucasus, the Middle East and Central Asia to China. Among this diversity of sources, Slavic, Latin and other European, Georgian and Armenian chronicles and works of Arab and Persian authors served as the source of the study. Analyzing these sources, it is necessary to take into account that the medieval authors, mostly, did not have direct experience of interaction with the Kipchaks. Information about the nomads was often transmitted through intermediaries or was based on rumors. It is important to note that the sources can be subjective and reflect the political or cultural biases of the authors. Therefore, when working with this data, it is necessary to apply the method of critical analysis, compare different sources and take into account the context in which they were created. An interdisciplinary approach was used to comprehensively study the rituals, beliefs, daily life and other aspects of the cultural anthropology of the Kipchaks. In addition to traditional historical methods, the study is based on cultural anthropological approach.

Culture and issues of social anthropology are rarely reflected in textual sources. Modern historiography has significantly expanded its exploration of the Kipchaks, with scholars from countries that had historical interactions with them, as well as Western historians, contributing a substantial body of research. Peter Golden stands out as a particularly influential figure within this field, having authored numerous seminal works on the Kipchaks and their broader historical context (Golden, 1998; Golden, 1984).

A significant challenge in historical research is that primary sources often provide incomplete or distorted perspectives. This can lead to reliance on conjecture and speculation on the part of the researcher. The present work aims to mitigate this issue by presenting factual information extracted directly from the primary text related to the topic under study.

Medieval Muslim Authors on the Kipchaks

At the dawn of the activity and onward the early Islamic authors, Muslim geographers and historians reported on the Kipchaks in connection with certain political events or mention them describing the geographical picture of certain territories in their works. However, little attention was paid to the description of the anthropology of Kipchaks and their cultural characteristics in these textual sources. The lack of information, and in some cases its absence, forces modern historians to use the available data, analyzing indirect evidence. There is also a more complex situation with the research of this topic. In most cases, the medieval Muslim authors' reports refer to the Turkic tribes in general, and not to the Kipchaks directly. It is difficult to judge how much they may be related to the Kipchaks, however, modern historiography makes references to this data as a direct evidence. Another particular feature of these sources is their compilation; they repeat the same report one after another with the addition of minimal new information.

Known between the tenth and thirteenth centuries, the country of Kipchaks is mentioned often as "Dasht i- Qipchaq" by Persian authors (Abdullah ibn Rizvan-Pasha, 2022) and "Sahra ul-Qibjaq" (ad-Dawâdâri, 1972, VII, 1272) or "Balad ul-Qifjaq" (al-Nuwayrî, 2004, XXIX, 268) by the Arab sources. Ibn Khordadbeh in his *al Masâlik w'al Mamâlik*, finished around 870, in the section "The Road from Zamin to Fargana" listing the Turkic tribes indicates the Khifshakh (Khordadbeh, 1889: 31). The tenth century unknown author of *Hudud al-Alam* mentions them as a northern tribe, stating that in the south, the Khifchaks border the Pechenegs, and all other parts border the northern uninhabited lands, where there is not a single living creature. The Khifchaks are a clan that separated from the Kimaks and settled in these parts, but the Khifchaks are more evil than the Kimaks and their ruler is appointed by the Kimaks (Hudud al-Alam, 1937: 101). Another tenth century author Ibn Hawqal also informs Kipchak and Kimak tribes as a union in the steppes of Northern Aral Sea region. However, describing port-town Darband, the author indicates the Kipchaks as one of its inhabitants (Ibn Hawqal, 1800: 159), even indicating the mountains of Kipchak in the map (Ibid, 156). Gardizi, the eleventh century Persian historian, in his *Zainu'l- Akhbar* nearly repeats information from Hudud al-Alam (Gardizi, 1928).

The Muslim textual sources list the tribes that make up the Kipchak tribal union. An-Nuwayri listed them as follows: Taqsaba, Tiba, Burj Ughli, Al-Burli, Qungur Ughli, Anjugli, Durut, Qalaba Ughli, Juratan, Qara Turki, and Kutun (al-Nuwayrî, 2004, XXIX, p. 268-269). V. Tizenhausen read the names of the tribes in the following edition: 1) Toksoba, 2) Ieta, 3) Burjogly, 4) Burly, 5) Kanguogly (or Kangarogly), 6) Anjogly, 7) Durut, 8) Karabarogly, 9) Juznan, 10) Kara-birkli, 11) Kotyan (Tizengauzen, 1884, 540-541). The difference between the original text and Tizenhausen's edition is clearly visible. Some of them can be considered controversial, and some are reliable. The latter

includes the name Toksoba, which is most likely a modified form of *Toqquz Oba* - nine communes.

The Muslim authors are not generous in describing the features of the Kipchaks' appearance, precisely, their physical anthropology. However, writing about the first encounter with the Mongols, the Muslim authors indicate that they were relatives. During the large-scale campaign of Jebe and Subutai in the 1220s, when the Mongol army crossed the Caucasus and encountered the Alans, Laks and Kipchaks, the textual sources convey interesting details. Ibn ad-Dawadari, the fourteenth century's Mamluk Egypt historian, writes that the Mongols had fought a great battle with the Alans, but they did not defeat them. So they sent messengers to the Qipchaqs, offering them alliance against the Alans and a share of their wealth, as they would tell them (ad-Dawādāri, 1972, VII, 1351). When proposing an alliance against the Alans, the Mongols, in order to persuade the Kipchaks to do so, referred to the fact that they had the same origin: "we are from you and you are from us" (nahnu minkum, wa'antum minna) (Ibidem, 1351). This event was reported earlier, in the thirteenth century, by the Arab author Ibn al-Athir, who was a contemporary of the event. He indicates the message of the Mongols to the Kipchaks more accurately: "we and you are one race" (nahnu wa'antum jinsun wahidun) (Ibn al-Athir, 2003, X, 417). The notion '*jins*' means a group of people that share similar or common characteristics, having similar features of appearance, behavior, culture and religion. Taking into account that it was the first encounter of this group of Kipchaks with Mongols, it make sense to assume that similarities in physical appearance, dealing with physical anthropology, the main attribute to be designated as "one race" - *jinsun wahidun*. The next factor indicating similarity is that both peoples were nomadic horsemen. Further, other common features could be identified, such as language, religion, culture and customs.

The twelfth century's poet Nizami Ganjavi, who was married to a Kipchak slave named Appak, presented him by the Darband emir (Aliyeva, 2006: 133), describes facial features and skin color as narrow-eyed and white skins in chapter "Iskandar's arrival in Dasht Qafchaq" in his poem "Iskandarnameh" (Nizami, chapter 47, bb. 17-19)

The way of living and activities of the Kipchaks, relevant to the interests of this study, have also been reported by the Islamic historians and geographers. As it has already been emphasized, many authors give information about the Turks in general. The direct information on lifestyle of the Kipchaks is described by an-Nuwayri. He states that they are the people of tents, they do not live in a house, nor do they settle behind walls, but they live in one territory in summer and move to another in winter (al-Nuwayrī, 2004, XXIX, 268). Indirectly, describing the Kimaks, *Hudud al-'Alam* concerns the Kipchaks' way of life, as they were under subordination of the Kimak confederation. The source reports that the Kimaks has only one town but

many tribes (gabila), which live in the felt tents and both in summer and winter wander along the grazing-grounds, waters, and meadows. Their commodities are sable-martens and sheep. Their food in summer is milk, and in winter preserved meat (Hudud al-Alam, 1937: 99-100).

Religious beliefs and traditions in this connection were widely describes by the Muslim chronicles, mentioned them Kafir/Kuffar, Majus, Zanadiqa and etc. Modern historiography considers Tengrism to be the main religion of the nomads of Eurasia. Before the monotheisation, the Kipchaks' pagan beliefs were associated with this system of religious worldview. As Tengrism was celestial god-centered system, they could easily be assimilated into one or another of the world religions (Golden, 1998: 181).

Although the stone balbals, attributed to the Kipchaks, are widely known, Abu Dulaf notes that they have house of worship, but no idols. Nizami Ganjavi in his poem "Isgandarnameh" provides valuable information about the installation of stone idols by the Kipchaks and their worship on them:

The Kipchaks always passing through it.
They bow before him.
Every footman and horseman goes that way,
Worship it as a shrine.
As riding their horses in front of it,
Gift an arrow from their quiver.
When shepherds pass by with their flocks,
Leave a sheep in front of shrine" (Nizami, chapter 47, bb. 73-76).*

As Nizami was married to the Kipchak woman, there is no doubt, she was his trusted source of information, and he used direct evidence from a bearer of the Kipchak culture. He could learn from first-hand that Kipchak women do not cover themselves and live freely with their faces unveiled. In addition, through her stories it became clear that they erect holy figures that they worship.

Prior to the Mongol invasions monotheisation of the Kipchaks was not a rare fact. Since history is well known for their acceptance of various doctrines of Christianity in Europe and the Caucasus, as well as Islam in Central Asia and Middle East during this period. Marwazi, reporting about the Turks in general in the ninth chapter of his work, says that when they come into contact with the Muslim countries, they embraced Islam. Then continues informing what to belong the Qun, and they were Nestorian Christians (Minorsky, 1942: 29). Ibn al-Athir states that in the month of Safar in the year 435 h. (September-October 1043), ten thousand tents of Turks who had been raiding and wreaking chaos on the Islamic lands of Balasagun and Kashgar, converted to Islam. On the Eid al-Ardha (Ramadan holiday) they slaughtered twenty thousand sheep (Ibn al-Athir, 2003, X, 265). W. Barthold claims that

* This is the literal translation. In the alternative translation "Sacrifice a sheep in front of shrine" (Nizami Ganjavi (2004), p. 309)

this message refers to the Kipchaks (Bartold, 1968: 100). However, we have no direct indication that this fact is connected specifically with the Kipchaks. In any case, we have such reports in the medieval Muslim texts, and this means that under the influence of contact with their neighbors, the Kipchak tribes could accept their religion. If the Kipchaks were sold as slaves to Christian countries, they accepted Christianity, but if to Muslim countries, they (mamluks) accepted Islam. After the Mongol conquest, the Kipchaks in the Middle East and the Golden Horde converted to Islam en masse. It is worth noting that, as Peter Golden rightly indicated with the reference to M.F. Koprulu, even after this they still retained elements of their previous beliefs through influenced by Shamanism tribesmen (Golden, 1998: 181).

Georgian and Armenian Textual Sources

In the Georgian and Armenian sources, the Kipchaks predominantly appear as allies, auxiliaries, and servants of the Kingdom of Georgia. The Kipchaks were brought to Georgia, settled, and maintained under the patronage of the Georgian royal court. Their daily life was typical of the nomadic people of the Eurasian Steppe. As it is well established in the historiography, the migrated Kipchaks were scattered across the different regions of Georgia, and the evidence from textual sources and archaeology supports this conclusion (The Life of David 2014: 178-182; Tsurtssumia 2013: 160-196; Tsurtssumia 2015: 138-159). The Kipchaks were originally pagan, but with the advent of their Georgian lifestyle, they began to embrace Christianity. The noble Kipchaks were baptized from the very beginning of their settlement in Georgia. This marked the beginning of the Christianization of the Kipchaks in the Georgian Kingdom (Murgulia & Shusharin, 1998: 117-121, 181-187). As for what doctrine of Christianity the Kipchaks adopted in Georgia, there is no doubt that it was the Eastern Orthodoxy. The Christian religion and pagan beliefs successfully merged in the life of the Kipchaks in Georgia. The archaeological evidence indicates that pagan elements played a significant role in the funerary practices of the Kipchaks. This is particularly evident in the burial rite that has been observed through the archaeological records. (Tsurtssumia 2013: 161-165)

Regarding the religious beliefs, customs, way of life and occupations of the Kipchaks, the Georgian and Armenian sources provide little information, mainly describing the Kipchaks as a military cavalry force. The first and the main primary source that deals with the Kipchak issue is the anonymous author of "The Life of *Mepetmepe* David", written shortly after David IV Aghmashenebeli passed away (Javakhishvili 1977: 210-213). The Kipchaks were settled in Georgia by David Aghmashenebeli in 1118 (batonišvili vaxušti, 1973: 158-159; Javakhishvili 1983: 199-200; Metreveli 1986: 166-182). Actually, this year marked as the starting point of large migration of Kipchaks into the Georgian Kingdom. The process of migration

was largely completed by 1120, as in February of this year David resumed his military campaigns against his neighbors. However, the process of Kipchak migration in Georgia can be observed up until 1124. The Georgian king passed away the following year, which largely halted this process (Murgulia & Shusharin, 1998: 115-151).

David Aghmashenebeli's military campaigns in 1120-1125 were conducted with the assistance of the Kipchaks, which can be observed based on "The Life of *Mepetmepe* David", supplemented by the Armenian sources as well. Matthew of Edessa mentions 15 000 Kipchaks in the Georgian army at the Battle of Didgori (Matthew of Edessa 1993: 227). The ratio of Georgians to Kipchaks was approximately three to one. The ratio seems to be more or less accurate; however, the number of forces on each side at the Battle of Didgori, as some historians have observed, should have been exaggerated by Matthew of Edessa. (Margishvili 2006: 93-98)

The mistrust towards the Kipchaks among the people living in the Kingdom of Georgia is another key issue that we can clearly observe in "the Life of *Mepetmepe* David". The author claims that they betrayed the king on numerous occasions, at least more than three times. (The Life of David, 2014: 189-190). In this instance not all the Kipchaks are meant, but the general description of the Kipchaks is not entirely positive. Notwithstanding the prevailing negative perceptions, the Kipchaks are depicted as brave warriors with no fear and no inclination to show their backs to the enemy. The king was the subject of criticism with regard to his Kipchak policy. Furthermore, his opponents had other reasons for criticism as well. According to "the Chronicle of Giorgi Lasha", the Kipchaks were engaged in robbery, but were forced to abandon their activities during the reign of Queen Tamar (The Chronicle of Giorgi Lasha, 2014: 203). The untrustworthy nature of the Kipchaks is also evidenced in Georgian folklore. The Georgian popular poetry describes the Kipchak as bully, greedy, and ungrateful (Sikharulidze 1965: 111-112).

The Georgian sources from the collection of texts, known as "Kartlis Tskhovreba", include four additional primary sources dealing with information concerning the Kipchaks. Three of them were written in the thirteenth century. "The Histories and Eulogies of the Sovereigns" was composed during the life of the Queen, and completed shortly following the death of Tamar (r. 1184-1210). The history of five sovereigns, also known as "the Chronicle of Giorgi Lasha", was composed after Giorgi IV Lasha passed away in the 1220s. The final text of this period "the History of *Mepetmepe* Tamar" was composed in the middle of the 13th century (Javakhishvili 1977: 221-241, 244-245, 373-395). All of these texts describe events that took place after David Aghmashenebeli (The Chronicle of Giorgi Lasha 2014: 202-203; The History and Eulogy of Monarchs 2014: 250; Basili 2014: 296; 320-322, 328, 334, 348, 350, 391). These primary sources clearly demonstrate the policy of successors

of David towards the Kipchaks of Georgia following the demise of their initial patron and benefactor.

The Kipchaks continued to serve in the army of the Georgian kings Giorgi III, grandson of David IV, who, based on almost all these sources, frequently used the Kipchaks in his military campaigns. The Kipchaks' help was essential in maintaining the royal power in Georgia during Prince Demna's uprising in 1177-1178 (The History and Eulogy 2014: 238, 241). One of the most trusted subordinates who played an important role in King's support was Qubasar, a leader of the Kipchak detachment under Giorgi's service. Qubasar is named as former Kipchak, which by all means suggests that he was baptized and integrated in the Georgian feudal society. Giorgi appointed him to the office of commander-in-Chief of the Georgian army, i.e. *amirspasalari*, despite the opposition of influential magnates. Notwithstanding Qubasar's baptism and integration into Georgian feudal society, his low birth status and origin was unacceptable to the Georgian nobility. Consequently, they forced the next ruler young and less experienced Queen Tamar to dismiss Qubasar from the office at the outset of her reign (The History and Eulogy, 2014: 241).

It is worthy of note that the Georgian sources differentiate the old and the new Kipchaks (The History and Eulogy 2014: 255). "Histories and Eulogies of the Sovereigns" mentions new Kipchaks. It is well established in the field of historiography that the new Kipchaks were the migrants who arrived in Georgia at a later date than the initial wave that commenced in 1118 under the rule of David Aghmashenebeli (Golden 1984: 63-64; Murgulia & Shusharin 1998: 153-158; Tsurtssumia 2015: 139). This illustrates the continuation of the Kipchak migration in Georgia.

Georgian and Armenian textual sources are informative on the Kipchak geography. The Georgian ethnonym for the Kipchak is "Q'ivchaq'i" and the country of the Kipchaks (Desht'i Kipchak) was called "Saq'ivchaq'eti" (žam'taağmcerli, 2008: 532, 543). The latter term can be properly explained as the land of Kipchaks, with "Sa" prefix commonly used in the Georgian language to indicate belonging. The ethnonym "Q'ivchaq'i" is the term to which the land belongs. Another name for the Land of Kipchaks is relatively close to the first one and could be transliterated as "Q'ivchaq'eti". The term is essentially identical, with the exception of the prefix indicating the belonging to a certain place.

"Didi saq'ivchaq'eti" is one more geographic term mentioned in the Georgian textual sources (žam'taağmcerli, 2008: 532, 543, 554). The proper English translation of the aforementioned geographic term is "Great Land of Kipchaks". The land that Georgian author of "Hundred Years Chronicle" describes seems to be greater than Ossetia, Russia, Khazaria, Bulgaria, Serbia, or any other territory to the north of the Caucasus. Notably, none of the aforementioned countries are rendered as "Great". From the Georgian sources,

it can be deduced that the term "the Great Land of Kipchaks" stretches all along those five core countries, which are: Ossetia, Russia, Khazaria, Bulgaria and Serbia. The most distant area from "the Great Land of Kipchaks" is "the Land of Darkness". It is evident that the Georgian author is referring "the Land of Darkness" to the territory that lies beyond "the Great Land of Kipchaks" in direction to the East, which encompasses the Siberian Taigas and Tundra. Moreover, Armenian historian Kirakos Gandzaketsi refers to the Kipchak lands as "Great" (Kirakos Gandzaketsi, 1986: 293), which is consistent with the Georgian source.

The Kipchaks and Armenians had long-term contacts, as result, some Kipchaks became adherents of the Armenian Church, using the Armenian alphabet. The judicial acts and the book of prayers "Algysht Bitigi" in the Kipchak language with Armenian script are products of these contacts. These Armeno-Kipchak texts were firstly published by A.N. Garkavets (Garkavets, 1986). However, the Armenian sources are generally less informative which could be explained by lack of contacts between the Armenian and Kipchak population from political and military perspective in the Caucasus. Matthew of Edessa (the 12th c.) mentions them largely in connection with Georgia and the Seljuk Empire (Matthew of Edessa, 1993: 195, 227); Kirakos Gandzaketsi provides a detailed account of the conflict between the Georgians and the Kipchaks during the reign of Giorgi IV Lasha (Kirakos Gandzaketsi, 1986: 168-169), which is supplemented by other sources including Vardan Areveltsi. Vardan relates about the same events, hence his information is similar to Kirakos Gandzaketsi's narrative. However, both authors present some piece of unique accounts about the Kipchak incursion in Georgia (Thomson 1989: 213-214). The same events are described by an anonymous chronicler from Sebastia, known as Sebastatsi. His information confirms the account of previous two Armenian authors, yet offers no substantial narrative additions (Galstyan, 1962: 23). The anonymous author wrote his chronicle after Kirakos and Vardan. The rest of the Armenian sources present only fragmented accounts about the Kipchaks, rendering them less useful.

The Slavic and Other European Medieval Sources

The first historical textual source in the territory of Rus' that mentioned the Kipchaks-Polovtsians was the "Tale of Bygone Years". The central place in the chronicle is occupied by the description of the Rus' campaigns in the steppes and the personality of Vladimir Monomakh, and the war of the Rus' with the Kipchaks is described as a struggle between Christianity and paganism. However some features of the life and beliefs of the Kipchaks are also noted. Thus, Nestor wrote about the custom of levirate (marriage to the widow of a brother), nomadism and food. He also outlined a version of the origin of the Kipchaks, like other peoples, from the unclean peoples of Gog and Magog, who violated God's will by moving from the lot of

Shem to the lot of Japheth. The chronicler perceived the Kipchaks within the boundaries of the Christian-Biblical matrix, condemning the warlike stereotype of the behavior of the Kipchaks (PSL).

The most detailed history of Dasht-i Kipchak is given by the Hypatian Codex (Ipatiev Chronicle, 1962). This chronicle was completed at the end of the thirteenth century, since the description of events reflected in it ends in 1292. The information of the Galician-Volynian chronicler is valuable both for the study of Dasht-i Kipchak and the political history of the Kipchak chiefdoms. Particular attention is paid to the Sharukanid dynasty and the story of Khan Atrak and his descendants (Pylypchuk, 2024: 18-34). The story of the campaign of Igor Svyatoslavich formed the basis of The Tale of Igor's Campaign (Likhachyov, 1975).

In the Hypatian Codex the Kipchaks were described as "poghanie", pagans. The chronicle mentions that on the eve of the battle near the Ugra River, in 1096, against Hungarinas, Khan Bonyak Burchевич howled like a wolf, asking for support in the battle (Ipatyevskaya, 1962, 245; Golden, 1998, 186-187; Aliyeva, 2006, 70). This is direct evidence of the existence of the wolf's cult as a protector among the Kipchaks. The chronicle when describing the campaigns against the Kipchaks, calls them snake heads. This means that in addition to the wolf, the dragon was also a sacred figure for the Kipchaks. The customs of the Kipchaks and their social organization are also described by the chronicle.

In the Laurentian Chronicle (Lavrentievskaya, 1962) events in the steppes are depicted fragmentarily. Data from the Vladimir-Suzdal and Rostov chroniclers, also the Novgorod First Chronicle (Novgorodskaya letopis, 1950) covering the events of the thirteenth century, are the important source on the history of Kipchaks in Eastern Europe.

One of the most important chronicles for the history of the Kipchaks is the chronicle called "History" by Niketas Choniates, who was the court chronicler of the Angelos dynasty and was also in the service of Theodore Laskaris. His chronicle was written around 1206. Nicetas Choniates described in detail the campaigns of the Angelos against the Bulgarians and the large-scale invasion of the Cumans and Vlachs into Thrace in 1201-1202. In covering these events, the author described some of the religious rites of the Cumans, whom he, like John Kinnam, called Scythians (Choniates N., 1862). Mikhail Choniates gives the Orthodox an example of the uncorrupted morals of the Kipchaks. This cleric, pointing out that the Kipchaks were pagans, said that they adhered to agreements among themselves. Idealizing the Kipchaks, the cleric omitted the details of the conclusion of such agreements, since they were associated with black magic. The Kipchaks had to drink each other's blood, and also cut up the dog over which they pronounced the oath (Choniates M., 2009)

Among the German chroniclers who mentioned the Kipchaks, it is necessary to highlight Adam of Bremen, who was the Bishop of Hamburg and left behind "Acts of the Archbishops of the Hamburg Church", written between 1072 and 1076. This chronicle contained a description of the peoples of Scandinavia and Eastern Europe and mentions homines Pallidi along with other peoples of Eastern Europe, including the Oghuz (Guz). Concerning the latter, the synonym Parti, that is, Parthians, was also used. Adam of Bremen's report is valuable for us because this is the first mention of the Kipchaks-Cumans in Western European Latin-language historiography. (Adam Bremenskiy, 1999)

A contemporary of the Mongol invasion of Hungary Roger of Torre Maggiore's chronicle, known as "*Carmen Miserabile super Destructione Regni Hungariae per Tartaros*" concerns the events associated with the Kipchaks. Thanks to his testimony, it is possible to establish the eastern borders of the Cuman bishopric and the time of the Kipchaks' migration to Hungary, and provides information about the last years of Khan Kotyan's life. This chronicle pointed out the contradiction between the settled population of Hungary and the nomadic Kipchaks. In particular, the Kipchaks stole women from the Hungarians and trampled the fields of the Hungarians with their herds. At the expense of the Kipchaks, the Hungarian King Bela IV hoped to strengthen his military forces. At his request, the Kipchaks accepted Catholicism. However they continued to worship their pagan gods, which irritated the Catholic clergy. The Hungarian barons were irritated by the fact that the Kipchaks wanted to join the elite of the kingdom. In addition, the reason for the xenophobia on the part of the Hungarians was the Mongoloid anthropological type of the Kipchak nobility (Rogerii 1892: 547–567; Magistr Rogerii, 2012).

Wilhelm de Rubruck and Plano Carpini noted the ethnic composition of the population of the Ulus of Jochi, and isolated facts about the religion and customs of the Kipchaks. Rubruck considered it sufficient to indicate the existence of different ethnic groups in Desht-i Kipchak. Among the Kipchaks, he named the Cumans, the Kapchat Cumans, the Kangle Cumans and the Kumuks. He also left a description of the Kipchak funeral rite, which allows us to reconstruct the spiritual life of the nomads of the Western Eurasian steppes (Carpini, Rubruk, 1957: 82-91). The description of the travels was published immediately after returning from the countries of the East in 1255.

Antivarian bishop Giovanni del Plano Carpini, who was the first to dare to undertake a long journey through Dasht-i Kipchak, noted the presence of Kipchak stone statues in the steppes, mistakenly calling them the graves of the Cumans. He also noted that the population of the region near Khorezm speaks the Kipchak language (Carpini, Rubruk, 1957: 103-110)

It is necessary to note the monuments of the French kingdom, written in Old French that concerned the history of the Cumans. In particular, the description of the wars with the Kipchaks is contained in the memoirs of Robert de Clari and Geoffroy de Villehardouin. The memoirs of the Picard

knight Robert de Clari, known to us under the title "Conquest of Constantinople", were written in the fresh wake of the Fourth Crusade. The chronology of events is brought to 1216. The memoirs describe the Battle of Adrianople, as well as the author's life in Picardy, which makes it possible to assert that the date of their writing was 1216. In "Conquest of Constantinople" the deeds of the crusaders in the Balkans and their defeat by the Bulgarian-Kipchak army in 1205 are depicted. Robert de Clari, in addition to describing the tactics of the nomads, left data on their field life. Although his work is less detailed than Geoffroy de Villehardouin's, his information is of great importance for the history of the Cumans and Kipchaks. (De Clari, 1986)

Some information about the life and customs of the Kipchaks was reported by Jean de Joinville (died 1317), a seneschal (table-steward), who together with his lord took part in the crusade against the Egyptian Mamluks. His work "The History of Saint Louis", completed in 1309, informs about the Kipchaks and only in connection with Narjo de Tussi, a French aristocrat in the Latin Empire. In particular, Jean de Joinville described the burial rites of the nomads, describing that a warrior servant was buried together with a Kipchak aristocrat and the aristocrat's horse. The Kipchaks accepted human sacrifices, which was reported by the Byzantine chronicler Nicetas Choniates. Also Jean de Joinville indicated that a letter was in the hand of the buried person, demonstrating that he had served his master faithfully. This fact shows that the Kipchaks had writing system, however, it is still unclear. Probably, they could use the writing of neighbors in the region. (Joinville, 2007: 118).

The chronicle of Hayton of Corycus, known to us under the title "Flowers of the Histories of the East", was written in Old French and published in Poitiers in 1307. The chronicle mentions the country of Comania. He considered the latter to be the largest country on earth and described the Kipchaks as nomads who did not have cities and were engaged in cattle breeding. Much more than other Armenian chroniclers, Hayton of Corycus was interested in the history of the Mamluks. He pointed out that the basis of the Mamluks were the Cumans converted to Islam (Osipyan 2004: 331-347; Osipyan 2009: 9-22).

Conclusion

The medieval textual sources, examined in this study, offer invaluable insights into the Kipchaks' historical trajectory and their multifaceted interactions within medieval Eurasia prior to the Mongol occupation of Kipchak lands. Through a meticulous analysis of these chronicles, treatises, and accounts, we are able to delineate the Kipchaks' significant political and military influence and their society, beliefs, and daily life. One of the results of this research indicates that textual sources provide evidence of the animistic and shamanistic beliefs within the Kipchak culture. However, extensive

examination of these sources reveal limited references to the worship of Gök Tengri, the supreme deity of Tengrism.

The cultural reorientation from a nomadic to a sedentary way of life was significantly influenced by the process of Christianization or Islamisation. Despite the fact that the Kipchaks easily accepted Christianity and Islam, the process of their integration was gradual and incremental. In addition to the newly embraced religion, the Kipchaks continued to adhere to their traditional beliefs and customs for an extended period.

The extensive territorial expansion of the Kipchaks contributed to the formation of a highly exaggerated perception of their domain. Despite the extensive geographical reach of the Kipchak nation, its political structure was characterized by fragmentation, lack of organization and disintegration. The absence of centralization rendered them vulnerable to external influence. A number of the Kipchak population opted for migration and service among powerful Christian or Muslim rulers, while those who remained in their homeland, known as Deshti- Kipchak, were subdued by the Mongol-Tatar Empire of the Golden Horde.

References:

1. Абдуллах ибн Ризван-паша (2020). *Хроника «Теварих-и Дешт-и Кипчак»*. [Abdullah ibn Rizvan-Pasha. The Chronicle "Tevarih-i Desht-i Kiptchak".] Подготовил к печати Абдужемилев Р. Р. Часть 1. // *Крымское историческое обозрение*, 2020 No 2, pp. 214–247, DOI: 10.22378/kio.2020.2.214-247
2. Abu Dulaf (1995). *al-Risalat al'Awla li'Abi Dulaf Misear bin al-Muhalhal al-Khazriji* [The first letter of Abu Dalf Misaar bin Al-Muhalhal Al-Khazraji]. Makkah, Ummul Al Qura University
3. ad-Dawādāri, Abu Bakr b. 'Abdallah b. Aybak (1972). *Kanz ad-Durar wa Jāmi 'al-Gurar*/Die Chronik des Ibn ad-Dawādārī, ed. Sald 'Abd al-Fattāh' Ašūr (Deutsches Archäologisches Institut Kairo, Cairo 1392/1972) VII
4. Адам Бременский (2011). Деяния епископов гамбургской церкви. In Russian [Acts of the Bishops of the Hamburg Church] // *Адам Бременский, Гельмольд из Босау, Арнольд Любекский. Славянские хроники*. —М.: СПСЛ; Русская панорама, pp. 7-150
5. al-Nuwayrī, Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb (2004). *Nihāyat al-arab fī funūn al-adab*. [Edge of desire in ethical disciplines] in Arabic, Cairo: al-Mu'assasa al-Miṣriyya al-Āmma lil-Ta'lif wa-l-Tarjama wa-l-Ṭibā'a wa-l-Nashr, 2004
6. Aliyeva, Lala (2006). *Qipçaqlar və Azərbaycan: etnogenez kontekstində* [Kipchaks and Azerbaijan: in the Context Ethnogenesis]. Baku, Baku State University Press
7. *Armenia and the Crusades Tenth to Twelfth Centuries: The Chronicle of Matthew of Edessa* (1993). Translated from the original Armenian with a

commentary and introduction by Ara E. Dostourian, foreword by K. H. Maksoudian, University Press of America, 1

8. *Армянские источники о монголах (Извлечения из рукописей XIII–XIV вв.)* (1962), In Russian [Armenian Sources about Mongols (Excerpts from Manuscripts)]. Перевод с древнеармянского, предисл. и прим. А. Г. Галстяна, Москва, Издательство восточной литературы;

9. Bartold W. (1968). Бартольд В.В. Кипчаки [The Kipchaks]. *Сочинения*. Том V. Работы по истории и филологии тюркских и монгольских народов. - Москва: Наука, - 757 с.

10. Basili (2014) *The Life of Tamar, the Great Queen of Queens*, translated and with commentary by D. Gamq'relidze, *Kartlis Tskhovreba (A History of Georgia)*, editor in Chief of English edition S. Jones. Tbilisi, Artanuji Publishing

11. batonišvili vaxušti, c'xovreba samep'osa sak'art'velosa (1973) In Georgian [Life of Kingdom of Georgia], *k'art'lis c'xovreba* [Life of Kartli], IV, gamosc'a S. Kaukhchishvili, t'bilisi, sabčot'a sak'art'velo

12. Carpini & Rubruk (1957). *Джиованни де Плано Карпини. История монголов. Вильгельм де Рубрук. Путешествие в Восточные страны* / In Russian Пер. с лат. А. И. Малеина. Ред., вступит. ст. и примеч Н. П. Шастиной. - М.: Государственное издательство географической литературы, 270 с.

13. Choniates Michael (2009). Крюков А.М. Византийцы и их соседи в проповедях Михаила Хониата. In Russian [Byzantines and their neighbors in the sermons of Michael Choniates]// *Причерноморье в средние века*. - Вып. 7. - М., Издательство Московского государственного университета-С. 33-53

14. Choniates Niketas (1862). Хониат Никита. История со времени царствования Иоанна Комнина. In Russian [History from the time of the reign of John Comnenus]/ Перевод редакции Н. В. Чельцова. - Т. 2 (1186 - 1206). - СПб.: Санкт-Петербургская Духовная Академия, 540 с.

15. The Chronicle of Giorgi Lasha and his Time (2014). Translated and with commentary by M. Abashidze, *Kartlis Tskhovreba [A History of Georgia]*, editor in Chief of English edition S. Jones. Tbilisi, Artanuji Publishing

16. c'xovreba mep'eť-mep'isa daviťisi (1955). In Georgian [Life of David, king of kings], *k'art'lis c'xovreba*, I, gamosc'a S. Kaukhchishvili, t'bilisi, sabčot'a sak'art'velo

17. Gardizi (1928). *Zainu'l- Akhbar*. Composed by Abu Said 'Abdu'l-Hayy b. ad-Dahhak b. Mahmud Gardizi. Edited by Muahammad Nazim. London, Lucas & Co

18. Garkavets (1986). Гаркавец А.Н. *Кыпчакские языки: куманский и армяно-кыпчакский* [Kipchak languages: Cuman and Armenian-Kypchak]. - Алма-Ата: Наука, - 226 с.

19. Golden P. B. (1984), Cumanica I: The Qipčaq in Georgia, *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi*, IV (Wiesbaden);

20. Golden, Peter (1998). Religion among the Qipčaq of Medieval Eurasia. *Central Asiatic Journal*. Vol. 42, No. 2 (1998), pp. 180-237

21. The History and Eulogy of Monarchs (2014). Translated and with commentary by D. Gamq'relidze, *Kartlis Tskhovreba* [A History of Georgia], editor in Chief of English edition S. Jones. Tbilisi, Artanuji Publishing

22. *Hudud al-'Alam* (1937): The Regions of the World: a Persian Geography (Gibb Memorial Trust) Translated and Explained by V. Minorsky, London, The University Press, Oxford, 1937

23. The Hundred Years' Chronicle (2014). Translated and with commentary by D. Gamq'relidze, *Kartlis Tskhovreba* [A History of Georgia], editor in Chief of English edition S. Jone. Tbilisi, Artanuji Publishing

24. Ibn al-Athir (2003). *Al-Kāmil fī al-tārīkh*. In Arabic, Volume 10, Beirut, Dar Al-Kutub Al-ilmiyya, 2003

25. Ibn Khordadbeh (1889). *Kitāb al-Masālik wa'l-Mamālik*. Leiden: Brill

26. Ibn Hawqal (1800). The Oriental Geography of Ebn Haukal An Arab Traveler of Tenth Century. Translated by Sir William Ouseley. London, The Oriental Press

27. Ипатьевская летопись (1962) In Russian [Hypatian Codex]/ Воспроизведение текста издания 1908 г. // Полное собрание русских летописей. – Т. 2. – М.: Восточная литература, XVI, 938, 87, IV с.

28. Javakhishvili I. (1977), *žveli k'art'uli saistorio mcerloba* (V-XVIII ss.), *t'xzulebani t'ormet tomad* [Old Georgian Historical Writings (the 5th-18th cc.), *Works in Twelve Volumes*], t. VIII, first published in 1916, ed. M. Lordkipanidze, t'bilisi, mecniereba

29. Javakhishvili I. (1983), *k'art'veli eris istoria, t'xzulebani t'ormet tomad* [History of Georgian Nation, *Works in Twelve Volumes*], t. II, first published in 1914, ed. V. Gabashvili, t'bilisi, mecniereba

30. Jean de Joinville (2007). Жан де Жуанвиль. *Книга благочестивых речений и добрых деяний нашего святого короля Людовика*. In Russian [The Book of Pious Sayings and Good Deeds of Our Holy King Louis]/ Пер. с старофранц. Цыбулько Г. Ф., под ред. Карачинского А. Ю., науч. ред. Малинин Ю. П. – СПб.: Евразия, 400 с.

31. Клари Робер де (1986). *Завоевание Константинополя*. In Russian [Conquest of Constantinople] / Пер., статья и коммент. Заборова М. А. – Москва: Наука, – 170 с.

32. *k'art'lis c'xovrebis žveli somxuri t'argmani* (1953) [Life of Kartli Old Armenian Translation] Georgian text with Armenian translation published by Ilia Abuladze, t'bilisi, bilisis saxelmcip'o universitetis gamomcemloba:

33. *k'art'uli sibržne: k'art'uli xalxuri poezia* (1965) [Folk Wisdom: Georgian Folk Poetry] in Georgian, IV, composed by K. Sikharulidze, t'bilisi, mecniereba

34. *Лаврентьевская и Суздальская летопись по Академическому списку* (1962). In Russian [Laurentian and Suzdal Chronicles according to the

Academic List] / Под. ред. акад. Е. Ф. Карского. Воспроизведение текста изд. 1926 – 1928 гг. // *Полное собрание русских летописей*. – Т. 1. – М.: Восточная литература, – VIII, 578 с

35. The Life of David, King of Kings (2014). Translated and with commentary by D. Gamq'relidze, *Kartlis Tskhovreba* [A History of Georgia], editor in Chief of English edition S. Jones. Tbilisi, Artanuji Publishing

36. Лихачёв Д. С. (1976). *Слово о полку Игореве*. In Russian [The Tale of Igor's Campaign]. — М.: Просвещение, — 175 с.

37. Margishvili S. (2006), *mit'ebi da realoba davit' aghmasheneblis mer'obis šesaxeb* In Georgian [Myths and Reality about the Reign of David Aghmashenebeli] (t'bilisi), siesta

38. Master Roger (2012). Магистр Рогерий. *Горестная песнь о разорении Венгерского королевства татарами*. In Russian [A Lamentable Song about the Destruction of the Hungarian Kingdom by the Tatars]: пер. с лат. Досаев А. С. – СПб.: Дмитрий Буланин

39. Metreveli R. (1986). *davit' IV aghmashenebeli: epok'is soc'ialur-ekonomikuri da politikur-kulturuli mimoxilva* [David IV Aghmashenebeli: Social-Economic and Political-Cultural Overview of the Epoch], t'bilisi, sabčot'a sak'art'velo;

40. Мургулия М.П., Шушарин В.П. (1998) *Половцы, Грузия, Русь и Венгрия в XII-XIII веках*. In Russian [Kipchaks, Georgia, Rus and Hungary in the 12th-13th centuries], Москва, Ин-т славяноведения и балканистики РАН

41. Minorsky, V. (1942). Sharaf al-Zaman Tahir Marvazi on China, the Turks and India. Arabic Text (circa AD 1120). London: The Royal Asiatic Society. p. 234.

42. Nizami Ganjavi. Isgandarnama. <https://ganjoor.net/nezami/5ganj/sharafname/sh47> in Persian [Accessed September 26, 2024]

43. Nizami Ganjavi (2004). Isgandarnama. Azerbaijani translation by Abdulla Shaiq. Baku, Azerneshr

44. Новгородская первая летопись старшего и младшего изводов (1950) In Russian [Novgorod First Chronicle of the Senior and Junior Editions]/ Под ред. и предисл. А. Н. Насонова. – М.: Издательство Академии наук СССР, 640 с.

45. Осіп'ян О. (2004) Нове джерело з історії монгольського походу на країни Центрально-Східної Європи (1236 – 1242 pp.) [A new source on the history of the Mongol campaign on the countries of Central-Eastern Europe (1236-1242)] // *Україна в Центрально-Східній Європі*. № 4. С. 331 – 347.

46. Осіп'ян А. Л. (2009) Описание Кумании Гетума из Корикоса как источник по истории степей Восточной Европы. In Russian [Description of Cumania by Getum of Corycos as a source for the history of the steppes of

Eastern Europe] // *Исследования по истории Восточной Европы*. – Вып. 2. – Минск: РИВШ, 2009. – С. 9 – 22.

47. *Повесть временных лет* (2012) In Russian [The Tale of Bygone Years]. Прозаический перевод на современный русский язык Д. С. Лихачёва

<http://www.hrono.info/dokum/1000dok/povest4.php>
<http://www.hrono.info/dokum/1000dok/povest5.php>

48. Pylypchuk Y. (2024) The Sharukanids: history of one Kipchak dynasty // *Reconstructing the Past: Journal of Historical Studies*. Vol. 2. № 1, pp. 18-34

<http://dx.doi.org/10.54414/MTAQ5968>

49. Rogerii (1892). Miserabile carmen super destructione regni Hungariae per Tartaros facta // *Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Scriptores*. – T. XXIX. – Hannover: Societas Apiriendis Fontibus Rerum Germanicarum Medii Aevi, 1892. – S. 547 – 567.

50. Tizengauzen (1884) *Сборник материалов, относящихся к истории Золотой Орды*. / Соч. В. Тизенгаузена. Т. 1- Извлечения из сочинений арабских. [Collection of materials related to the history of the Golden Horde / Ed. by V. Tiesenhausen. Vol. 1. Extracts from Arabic works.] Санкт-петербург, Издательство графа С.Т.Строганова

51. Tsurtsunia M. (2012), qivčag'ta sakit'xisat'vis XII saukunis dasacqisis k'art'ul politikaši [Towards the Qipchaq (Cuman) Question in Georgian Policy of the Early 12th C.], *ivane j'avaxišvilis saxelobis t'bilis saxelmcip'o universitetis sak'art'velos istoriis institutis šromebi* [Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University Faculty of Humanities Institute of Georgian History Proceedings], VI, t'bilisi, meridiani

52. Tsurtsunia M. (2013), vanisa da zurtaketis samarxebi rogor' cqaro šua saukuneebis sak'art'velos istoriisat'vis [Vani and Zurtaketi Burials as a Source for the History of Medieval Georgia], *saistorio krebuli* [Historical Collections], III, mxedari

53. Tsurtsunia M. (2015). va qivčag'uri kvali šua saukuneebis k'art'ul materialur kulturaši (XII-XIV ss. muzaradebis mixedvit') [Qipchak Trace in the Medieval Georgian Material Culture], *saistorio krebuli* [Historical Collections], V, mxedari

54. žam'taağmcerli, asclovani matiane (2008) In Georgian [Hundred Years Chronicle], published by G. Alasamia. *k'art'lis c'xovreba* [Life of Kartli], m't. red. R. Metreveli, t'bilisi, meridiani, artanuji;

55. Zhiyembay B.S., Kossybayev M.M, Meirambekova L.K. (2022), Literary and cultural facts for the study of the Armenian-Kypchak heritage, *Bulletin of L. N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University*, № 4 (141).

