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NEW HOME, NEW HERDS

**CUMAN INTEGRATION AND ANIMAL
HUSBANDRY IN MEDIEVAL HUNGARY FROM
AN ARCHAEOZOOLOGICAL
PERSPECTIVE**

Kyra Lyublyanovics

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NEW HOME, NEW HERDS: CUMAN INTEGRATION AND ANIMAL HUSBANDRY IN MIEVEAL HUNGARY FROM AN ARCHAEOZOOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

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contributed to my well-being without which this research could not have been conducted.

We usually consider our academic achievements our own merit and it is customary to thank our professors and colleagues for their support, while we rarely give a thought to the fact that it is partly a historically defined accumulation of the Earth's wealth that allows us to carry out research, live in comfortable flats and in good hygienic circumstances, read by artificial light in the evening, go to libraries maintained by the huge institutions, or do tests in laboratories. I believe luck is as much of a factor in our success as diligence, mental skills or hard work. While I would never underestimate the intellectual efforts put into any piece of scholarship, I definitely feel the need to give a thought to those people I met during my research travels, from Kazakhstan to Mexico and Argentina, those who never had the same opportunities as I have, and for whose fate and well-being, I believe, every intellectual must feel some responsibility.

Preface

This book is based on the PhD dissertation I defended at Central European University in 2015 as a result of an eight year-long research project. Faunal assemblages have the potential to reveal direct, and by other means, unavailable information on animal keeping practices, although this source of evidence often escapes scholarly attention in Central and Eastern Europe. In this study I combined a primary, natural scientific dataset gained from tens of thousands of animal bones with textual sources, and interpreted them within the framework of settlement history in order to tackle the manifold integration process of a medieval community. Animal husbandry might seem utterly alien to politics, diplomatic or intellectual history, however, the web of practicalities the human-animal bond created, and the concepts it was surrounded with, all contributed to a medieval reality which gave rise to all other historical phenomena historians traditionally study.

The aim of this research was to collect all available information, historical, ethnographic and archaeological alike, on the animal husbandry aspect of the complex development the medieval Cuman population underwent in Hungary. Although this medieval minority has been in the focus of scholarly interest in the past decades, no attempt has been made so far to study their herds through interdisciplinary methods in a comprehensive way. By publishing this work as a monograph, I hope to make this dataset available to an international audience. Many of the essential and brilliant pieces of scholarship written on Cuman history and discussed in this volume are available only in Hungarian and as such, have failed to gain wide international recognition. Hopefully, this book will not only trigger new research objectives but also contribute to the appreciation of such scholarly achievements presently available only to a limited circle of specialists.

The original dissertation included a chapter on an Iron Age site in Kazakhstan which I juxtaposed with the Cuman sites excavated in Hungary. This part of my research was made possible by the Kazakh-American Archaeological Expedition, and some of the results (although from a different perspective) has been published.¹ This chapter was omitted from the book for various reasons, limitations in length being only one of these. This volume focuses on the Hungarian medieval material and aims to make a contribution to the history of the Cumans who arrived in the Hungarian Kingdom in the thirteenth century. My work in Kazakhstan provided an interesting insight into the life of a semi-nomadic, pastoralist Eurasian

community, however, I felt that the huge geographical and chronological distance, and the very vague connection with the medieval Cumans (if any) made this chapter somewhat unfitting, even if not completely irrelevant to this book. Besides, a short and rather descriptive summary based on only three years' excavations would hardly do justice to the outstanding work that Claudia Chang and Perry Tourtelotte, the colleagues I was lucky to work with, have done in the past twenty years in the Almaty region, in southeastern Kazakhstan. Animal husbandry at Tuzusai would deserve a monograph on its own, with a different focus, an Iron Age comparative material, as well as a more in-depth analysis of proper nomadic ethnography, which is far beyond the scope of the present volume.

The core chapter of this book examines the collected textual and archaeological evidence that reveal information on animal husbandry of the Cuman community in medieval Hungary. Written records and archaeological sources associated with the Cumans and their economic activities are examined from region to region, taking bigger geographical areas as units of the Cuman habitation zone. The areas known as Greater Cumania, Lesser Cumania, and Transdanubia are discussed separately; these regions seem to have been associated with different Cuman clans and were later organized into separate administrative units. After this systematic review, two additional sites, located on the Cuman area's periphery, are discussed. One chapter is dedicated to environment exploitation in the Cuman areas, that is, forest and pasture management, fishing, and hunting. The different aspects of handling and processing the animal carcass are investigated in another chapter, including butchering patterns and meat preferences, the ritual use of animal bodies, and the exploitation of the carcass for raw material. Pathological phenomena observed in the faunal assemblages, their possible explanation, and the evidence for veterinary treatment is in the focus of a separate chapter.

My main question was if animal exploitation in Cuman communities differed from that observed at settlements with a known Hungarian population, and if so, how these evolved over time. Any regional alterations between the different Cuman habitation areas, that is, Greater and Lesser Cumania, and Transdanubia, were also looked for. The boom in animal herding witnessed in the late medieval period, as well as the modern, nineteenth-century image of the Cumans as a pastoralist people, raised the question of the starting point for Cuman specialization in animal husbandry. Had this already been developed by the time they entered the Kingdom of Hungary, or was it a result of integration into a state-level economic system, stimulated by new market opportunities? The influence that power centers (economic and/or political ones) had on the forms

¹ MaryFran Heinsch, Pamela B. Vandiver, Kyra Lyublyanovics, Alice M. Choyke, Chandra Reedy, Perry Tourtelotte, and Claudia Chang, "Ceramics at the Emergence of the Silk Road: A Case of Village Potters from Southeastern Kazakhstan during the Late Iron Age," *MRS Online Proceedings* 1656 (January 2015).

of economic integration was also addressed. On a more social than economic level, butchering methods, meat preferences, as well as food processing traditions were examined in order to shed light on changing customs at the household.

Throughout the book, I use the term ‘assimilation’ for the process whereby a minority group gradually adopts the customs and attitudes of the prevailing culture without being able to maintain its own distinctiveness. As we will see, this term can be used for the Cumans in a linguistic sense: their language died out in the seventeenth century, and from early modern times on they regarded Hungarian as their native tongue. For their economy and social structures in general, however, the term ‘integration’ might be preferred as it signifies that the group was merged into another system but did not necessarily abandon all its own attitudes and characteristics. I rather see this process as the adaptation of several groups at different stages of economic development to an economic and social environment which somewhat differed from one region to the other. In other words, what we are dealing with is rather a set of individual cases with patterns of similarities and differences. What is observed at one settlement may not be fully true for another. Therefore, I would prefer to discuss forms of integration instead of stages, ‘stage’ meaning a defined step in a process that is linear and has a clear endpoint.

I expected the animal husbandry customs of the Cumans entering Hungary to change relatively rapidly as a consequence of their adapting to a new economic and ecological environment, new spatial boundaries and new markets. At the same time, customs of cooking and meat consumption, body part preferences, and the tools and methods of butchering, social customs associated with the more intimate household sphere, were supposedly more

conservative, remaining unchanged for a considerable period of time. The working hypothesis I tested in my PhD thesis, and which eventually held true, stated that specialization in animal husbandry in the Cuman areas was, more or less, a consequence of the economic nexus of the fifteenth century. Recognizing this opportunity, Cumans were able to fill an economic niche created by increasing market demands and the thirteenth-century loss of the food-producing population due to the ravages of the Mongol incursions. Thus, they had the opportunity to exploit capital in the trade with animals and animal-based products. The presence of a large market center in the near vicinity of their pasture lands, with merchants who could buy up the livestock, and a road-network connecting various regions, could significantly contribute to the flourishing of a given settlement.

Cuman groups who had already been highly specialized in animal husbandry must have had a long history of economic relations with agriculturalist peoples, providing a model for them to focus on one branch of economic activity. For such communities, self-sufficiency might have been easily abandoned in their new home, in favor of higher production as a consequence of penetrating new technologies, markets, capital and values. For other, not highly specialized Cuman groups, who were rather accustomed to rely on a multi-resourced system, the process of economic transformation must have been slower. Although the picture gets more clear by the late medieval period, the early phases of Cuman-Hungarian coexistence cannot be properly addressed until more information is available on the various migrating Cuman families, their history and background. Nevertheless, the slogan ‘new home, new herds’ probably applied to all those who decided to settle in the Great Hungarian Plain and became subjects to the Hungarian king.

Chapter 1

Cuman history in perspective

In his small 2009 book on the descendants of Cuman leaders in Eastern Europe, Sultan Katanchiev cites an interesting anecdote he heard from 72 year-old Bilyan Ketenchiev, who learned it from his father.¹ The Ketenchiev family – in the author’s interpretation, directly related to the thirteenth-century Cuman khan Kuten – had always been famous for their straightforward and courageous ways, and cherished all family stories that demonstrated their noble character. Once a certain Yakub, member of the family, had a magnificent stallion. A prince who often crossed the village with his henchmen was so much taken by the animal’s beauty that he asked Yakub to allow him to ride it just once. Yakub, in accordance with traditional Caucasian hospitality, gave his permission with pleasure. However, in a few days’ time the prince asked for the horse again, and the more time he spent on the back of the stallion, the greater his desire grew to own it, so finally he asked Yakub to give him the horse as a gift. The young man refused; he was a *dzhigit*, a brave equestrian who was not considered a man if he had no horse. The prince answered with a burst of anger and threatened Yakub to take the animal by force. The family advised the young man to sell the horse before the prince returns, but Yakub rather killed the prince and had to hide in the mountains for a time in order to escape the vengeance of the prince’s family.

In spite of all the methodological problems inherent in Katanchiev’s theories on Cuman family ties, this anecdote gives a valuable insight into the way a Cuman khan’s – real or imaginary – descendant was expected to behave, even according to nineteenth-twentieth-century narrators. This kind of attachment to the animal companion is touched, but in fact never dwelt upon very long in the sources and scholarly literature on Eurasian nomads. If presented to an academic audience, the above-mentioned anecdote would, in all likelihood, be analyzed from the point of view of social structure, family ties, rights and obligations, but most probably only few approaches would focus on the human-animal bond that lies at its core – although this bond might have influenced more aspects of history than appears at first sight.

The Cumans, a people that inhabited the steppe zone in the medieval period, formed a tribal federation with the Kipchaks, and actively shaped the fate of the region from the Black Sea to the Carpathian Basin, have been primarily known to history as nomadic, mounted warriors. Among their numerous interactions with medieval feudal states there is one which is of special interest in terms of nomad-sedentary relations: their integration to the Hungarian

Kingdom after their thirteenth-century migration to the country. This transformation of the Cuman community has been in the focus of research in the past decades; however, so far not much attention has been given to how their animal husbandry was transformed, although this branch of agriculture is seen as the main economic activity they were involved in during their life on the steppe. This book discusses this aspect of their economic and social integration. Through the examination of both written sources and archaeological evidence, this study aims to clarify how animal-based activities from herding to food preparation, the view of domesticates, and their role in the Cumans’ belief system changed through the course of the Late Middle Ages.

“Animal studies”, as they are called nowadays, make a valuable contribution to history, even though the topic has been, and still is, a marginal area within – or rather between – disciplines. From our modern perspective we tend to see the various aspects of the human-animal bond as separate phenomena, a source of folktales, symbols and imagination; a means of food production and a source of raw materials as well as power. This separation is, nevertheless, completely arbitrary and artificial. Co-existence with animals in the past as well as today not only influenced human culture through various elements in the human-animal relationship, but represented a framework within which a given community organized its daily activities, defined aspects of its identity or presented itself to the outside world. In *The Secret History of the Mongols*, long passages are dedicated to how posting stations that made a speedy journey with changing horses possible, were set up (an establishment Khan Ogodei mentions among his most notable deeds), and how sheep, milking mares and oxen were provisioned to supply these stations.² This is an example of a large-scale enterprise that required attention to the animals’ physical needs and whose success, on the other hand, had an enormous impact on the community network.

In medieval Europe, animals were present in almost all aspects of life: meat consumption meant consuming the animal’s body as well as facing our own, gluttonous and greedy animal self, a notion repeatedly addressed by the church; using an animal’s skin and bones for producing leather clothes, vellum for books or tools for agricultural work was inevitably intertwined with the concepts of luxury and status representation. The herd was, for many communities, the basis of subsistence, and activities connected to it were the common means of making a living; even religious monasteries at least took care of

¹ Szultan Talevics Katancsijev, *Kun vezérek leszármazottai Kelet-Európában*. [The descendants of Cuman Leaders in Eastern Europe.] (Budapest: Cédrus Művészeti Alapítvány – Nap Kiadó, 2009), 51.

² Urgunge Onon (translated and ed.), *The Secret History of the Mongols. The Life and Times of Chinggis Khan* (Abingdon, Oxon, UK: Routledge-Curzon, 2005), 276-277.

a small flock of sheep or herd of pigs, or started large-scale agricultural enterprises such as the mansions of the Cistercians. At the same time, animals may be found on coats-of-arms, they appeared as ornaments and in metaphorical form on illuminated manuscripts, or could even be incorporated within a constructed ancestry justifying the position of a political leader. Some species became associated with religious concepts in the most intricate manner. Animals served as food, through which social status could be communicated; their dead bodies provided raw material for clothes and everyday items used in the household as well as in the workshops; it was their skins on which the accounts, chronicles, religious works or donations were noted and preserved; they were feared as the beasts of the wild and despised as vermin; and they prevailed in human imagination, from the human-like animal characters of Aesop to the half animal, half human creatures of hell depicted by Hieronymus Bosch.

The human-animal connection seems even stronger in the case of past nomadic peoples. Nomadism has been considered an animal-based way of life, in which the spatial movement of the community follows an intricate schedule fitted to the herd's biological needs, and in which the concept of wealth is interlocked rather with the animal herd than with cultivated land or money. Whether this connection was, in fact, more expressed and obvious in the mind of nomads, is impossible to say, partly due to the complexity of the phenomena we associate with the label of nomadism, and partly due to a lack of authentic sources. It is certain, however, that a community whose annual movement follows animal tracks and whose primary economic activity is herding, will have a different view of animals than groups living a sedentary life based mainly on land cultivation. On the other hand, the human-animal connection was important not only in terms of economics and social cohesiveness but also in the way groups were seen from the outside: medieval nomads are often reported to rely solely and exclusively upon their herds, but also to behave and live like animals, have customs resembling those of wild beasts, kill Christians with an animal-like bestiality and even consume the flesh of humans, like wolves.³

The Cumans, the subjects of the present study, do not have their own written account, and their present-day perception of their own history in Hungary has been shaped by their early modern struggle for their privileges, as well as by nineteenth-century identity building and the modern re-discovery of their (at least, imagined) ancient heritage, the latter inevitably intertwined with animal husbandry and animal breeding. Since animal keeping is seen as the predominant occupation of the Cuman groups entering the Hungarian Kingdom in the thirteenth century, the transformation of this branch of the economy must have been a key element in the process during which the

newcomers found their niche in their new homeland; at the beginning, the demands for extensive grazing land seems to have been at the root of serious conflicts with the surrounding indigenous Hungarian populations as well.

In this introductory chapter, an outline of Cuman history will be presented to create the historical context in which their integration within medieval Hungary and the transformation of their animal-based economy will be discussed.

1.1 Early Cuman history – an outline

Much scholarly debate has been focused on the early history of the Cumans. People with names like Cuman, Qún, Куман, Kipchak, Polovtsi, Walben etc. appear in historical sources,⁴ and it remains difficult to reconstruct ethnic boundaries and migrations on the basis of the sporadic and often quite contradictory written evidence. These denominations, known from medieval sources, cannot be transferred to ethnic or even cultural entities as we think of them today: the groups behind them were constantly merging, separating and making alliances. As Horváth notes, language and ethnic identities were probably of secondary importance in the nomads' life, and acculturation / assimilation (both in linguistic and anthropological terms) must have been an important factor in the lives of different groups that existed in close proximity to each other. Moreover, these names (taken as ethnic terms by the historical tradition) may only be relevant for certain periods, and may actually signify that whole military and political alliances were named after their leading elite.⁵ Both the itinerary of the Cumans' long, complex migration, and their relationship with other steppe peoples such as the Kipchaks, the Qitay and the Uyghur, are questions yet to be resolved. Here, there is no room for a detailed discussion of all available sources and existing views on the astonishingly complex history of the Turkic tribes, but a short summary of early Cuman history is, nevertheless, necessary.⁶

In the mid-sixth century AD, a population of Turkic origin appeared in the steppe region of Inner and Central Asia. They came from the southern area of the Altay mountains and up to the eighth century they possessed political

⁴ András Pálóczi Horváth, "A kipszak pusztaságtól Cumaniaig" [From the Kipchak desert to Cumania], in *Keleti népek a középkori Magyarországon. Besenyűk, úzok, kunok és jászok művelődéstörténeti emlékei* [Peoples of Eastern origin in Medieval Hungary. The cultural heritage of Pechenegs, Uzes, Cumans and the Jász]. *Studia ad Archaeologiam Pazmaniensiae – Archaeological Studies of the Péter Pázmány Catholic University, Department of Archaeology 2.* (Budapest: Archaeolingua, 2014), 71-86: 71-73.

⁵ Ferenc Horváth, *A csengelei kunok ura és népe* [The lord and people of the Cumans in Csengele] (Budapest: Archeolingua, 2001), 236. (henceforth: Horváth, *A csengelei kunok*)

⁶ A lot of what is known (and hypothesized) today is based on linguistic evidence, which cannot be discussed here extensively. For a detailed argument on the Cumans' migrations from Eastern Asia to Europe in the Hungarian scholarship, see: András Pálóczi Horváth, *Hagyományok, kapcsolatok és hatások a kunok régészeti kultúrájában* [Traditions, connections and influences in the archaeological culture of the Cumans] *Keleti Örökségünk 2* (Karcag: Karcag Város Önkormányzata, 1994), 17-95 (henceforth: Pálóczi Horváth, *Hagyományok, kapcsolatok és hatások*); Horváth, *A csengelei kunok*, 235-262.

³ Felicitas Schmieder, "Menschenfresser und andere Stereotype gewalttätiger Fremder – Normannen, Ungarn und Mongolen (9-13. Jahrhundert)" in *Gewalt im Mittelalter. Realitäten – Imaginationen*, ed. by Manuel Braun and Cornelia Herberichs (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2005), 159-179. (henceforth: Schmieder, *Menschenfresser*)

authority over a vast region in the steppe zone, forming the political entity known from Chinese sources as the Turkic Khaganate. Later, Uyghur-Oghuz tribes took over the region in the eighth century and the Uyghur Khaganate was formed. This Turkic-Uyghur-Oghuz complex gave rise to the custom of horse burials. This diverse funerary tradition, typical for nomadic horsemen of the steppe, appeared in this zone in the sixth to eighth centuries in almost all its known forms.⁷

How and whether the predecessors of the Cumans were related to this Turkic-Uyghur-Oghuz complex, is uncertain. There are two main views on the Cumans' ancient homeland: some locate it in northeastern China, north of present-day Beijing, on the southeastern border of the Gobi Desert; others locate it on the borders of Inner Asia and southern Siberia. Accordingly, two distinct routes of migration have been reconstructed. One runs from China through the southern borderland of the Gobi Desert, the Dzhungarian Gate and the Semirechye area; the other starts from the Altay mountains, Lake Baikal and the upper reaches of the Yenisey River, through northern Mongolia, southwestern Siberia and the Turgay Gate. In both cases, however, the migration reached the southern Russian steppe zone through present-day Kazakhstan.

The former theory, first presented by Marquart in 1914,⁸ is mainly based on an account of the Arab chronicler Marwazi, written around 1120. This text mentions a group of Turkic people called the *Qūn*. According to the text they came from northeastern China and had left their ancient homeland because they were afraid of the khan of the Qitay. However, at another point Marwazi writes they migrated due to the scarcity of pastures in their original lands, suggesting that these people were mobile pastoralists. Interestingly, Marwazi presents them as Nestorian Christians, but at the same time, he connects Ekinchi ibn Qochar, a shah of the Muslim state of Khwarezm (died in 1097), to them. They were followed by the people called the Qay, who pressed them forward, and thus, the Qun came to the land of the Šari (who may be identified with the "Pale Uyghur",⁹ a people who lived in the region of the Nan-Shan mountains). Probably there was some assimilation going on between these ethnic elements, something also reflected in the confusion surrounding their names.¹⁰ Although Marwazi's account has been in the focus

of debates, it is clear that the people mentioned by him could not have fueled a huge wave of migration alone.¹¹ Moreover, according to Marwazi's chronology, they must have made this 6,000 km journey in only 30 years' time, which also seems highly unlikely.¹² This, however, is not the only contradiction in Marwazi's account, which has to be handled with care. It has also been proposed that Marwazi may have confused two events in the ninth and tenth centuries, respectively, hence the chronological problems in his report.¹³ The identification of the Qun with the Cumans is debated and the debate has not yet been settled; in fact, it was questioned whether the Qun noted in Muslim and Syrian sources have any connection with the Cuman-Kipchak tribes.¹⁴ This would also mean that the Cumans' ancient homeland was not northeastern China but must be sought elsewhere.

The other main theory locates the Cumans' homeland in the Altay region and southern Siberia. The name Kipchak, by which the Muslim and Mongol sources probably meant Cumans (or at least the ancestors of those who later were known as the Cumans),¹⁵ appears on an eighth-century inscription suggesting that they belonged to the leading elite of the Turkic Khaganate that previously ruled over the steppe zone.¹⁶ The Kipchaks mentioned in *The Book of Roads and Kingdoms* by Ibn Khordadbeh (ninth c.) were still living in the southern part of Siberia, that is, in the northeastern zone of the vast area inhabited by Turkic peoples. They probably formed a political alliance with the Kimeks or were subjugated to them in the framework of the Kimek Khaganate situated between the Ob and Irtysh Rivers.¹⁷ Archaeological evidence as well as linguistic investigations also trace the Cumans to southern Siberia. Most importantly, the *kamennaya baby* statues, known from southern Russia (an area inhabited by Cumans in the eleventh to thirteenth centuries), appear first between the Altay and Sayan Mountains in the sixth century. Those variants closest to the Cuman statues were found in the area of modern-day Tuva, the geographical center of Asia

⁷ Horváth, A csengelei kunok, 239.

⁸ Joseph Marquart, "Über das Volkstum der Kumanen", in *Osttürkische Dialektstudien*, ed. Willy Bang and Joseph Marquart (Berlin: Weidmann, 1914), 25-238: 38-42, 57, 64-68, 78-80, 113-163, 173-186.

⁹ Czegléd, Károly, "A kunok eredetéről" [On the origin of the Cumans] *Magyar Nyelv* 45 (1949), 43-50: 47. (henceforth: Czegléd, A kunok eredetéről).

¹⁰ Németh argues that the word Qoman means "yellow, pale" in Turkic languages, and Czegléd found that the Sari are probably identical with the Sari Uyghur or Pale/Blond Uyghur, who were named this way after their physical appearance. This may signify a connection between the Cumans and the Uyghurs. In Czegléd's view the name Qoman was given in the eleventh century to the people previously known as the Sari, by other ethnic groups of the Kipchaq federation. Gyula Németh, "A kunok neve és eredete" [The name and origin of the Cumans] *Századok* 76 (1942), 166-178; Czegléd, A kunok eredetéről, 47-48.

¹¹ Czegléd, A kunok eredetéről, 44.

¹² Horváth, A csengelei kunok ura és népe, 252.

¹³ Omeljan Pritsak, "The Polovtsian and the Rus," *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 2 (1982), 321-380.

¹⁴ Györffy, György, "A kun és a komán népnév eredetének kérdéséhez." [On the origins of the ethnic names kun and koman.], in: György Györffy, *A magyarság keleti elemei* [Eastern elements of the Hungarian people.] Budapest: Gondolat, 1990. 200-219 (henceforth: Györffy, A kun és komán népnév); György Györffy, *Az Árpád-kori Magyarország történeti földrajza* [The geography of Hungary in the period of the Árpád Dynasty] Vol. 2 (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1987), 525-526 (henceforth: Györffy, Az Árpád-kori Magyarország történeti földrajza)

¹⁵ The thirteenth-century traveler William of Rubruck, who made a journey to the court of the Great Khan Möngke and reported on the Eurasian steppes, identifies the two peoples. Peter Jackson and David Morgan eds, *The Mission of Friar William of Rubruck*. Works Issued by the Hakluyt Society, Second Series no. 173 (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1990), 105. (henceforth: Rubruck ed. Jackson and Morgan)

¹⁶ Horváth, A csengelei kunok, 254; Golden, Peter. "Cumanica IV: The Tribes of the Cuman-Qipcaqs." *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 9 (1995-97), 99-122: 102, footnote 10 (henceforth: Golden, Cumanica IV); Toru Senga, "Megjegyzések a kimekek törzsszövetségének kialakulásához" [Notes on the development of the tribal alliance of the Kimeks] *Antik Tanulmányok / Studia Antiqua* 41 (1997) /1-2, 175-193: 187, see also footnote 53.

¹⁷ Golden, Cumanica IV, 102-103.



Fig. 1.1.1 The Eurasian steppe in the early thirteenth century. 1 – frontiers of the Russian Principalities in 1055; 2 – the location of the “Chernye klobuky” (“black hats”) federation (Turkic tribes in alliance with the Rus). The statuettes mark the central Cuman territory. After Pálóczi Horváth, *Pechenegs, Cumans, Iasians*, 40-41.

in southern Siberia, and were dated to the eighth century (that is, to the time when the Uyghur Khaganate arose). Similar statues are present in the Semirechye, the Land of the Seven Rivers, north of the Tien Shan mountains in Central Asia, around the modern-day city of Almaty in Kazakhstan.¹⁸

The Cuman-Kipchak arrival in Europe was part of a great migration wave in the steppe zone in the first half of the eleventh century. Pálóczi Horváth argues that this movement was probably triggered by the expanding Qitay Empire in the early eleventh century (he accepts Marwazi’s account and proposes that there must have been another additional route north of the Dzhungarian Gate that passed through Kimek and Kipchak territories).¹⁹ Whatever their route may have been, it is certain that by the eleventh-twelfth century, Cuman-Kipchak tribal alliances controlled a huge territory covering present-day Kazakhstan, southern Russia and the Ukraine to western Wallachia and southern Moldavia. This Pontic steppe region was frequently called Cumania in Byzantine, Arab and Russian sources (not to be confused with a smaller

area located in modern-day Ukraine and Wallachia, also called Cumania in the western sources after the first Cuman groups converted to Christianity). In the second half of the eleventh century a new, distinct archaeological culture appears west of the Volga River, suggesting there had been a movement of a human population. This late nomadic archaeological heritage (mainly burials) was analyzed and categorized extensively by the Soviet archaeologists Pletneva and Fedorov-Davydov.²⁰ The group of finds associated with the Cumans revealed typical funerary grave goods including the burial of whole horse carcasses in a separate pit, covering the grave with planks or timbers, and a stone covering or the presence of stones

²⁰ German Alekseyevich Fedorov-Davydov, *Kochevniki Vostochnoy Evropy pod vlastyu zolotoordynskih hanov* [The Nomads of Eastern Europe under the rule of the Golden Horde Khans] (Moscow: Izdatelstvo Moskovskogo Universiteta, 1966) (henceforth: Fedorov-Davydov, *Kochevniki Vostochnoy Evropy*); Svetlana Alexandrovna Pletneva, “Pecenegi, torki i polovcy v juznorusskikh stepjakh” [Pechenegs, Turks and Polovtsy in the South Russian steppes] in Mikhail I. Artamonov (ed) *Trudy Volgo-Donskoj arheologiceskoj ekspedicii. Materialy i issledovanija po arheologii SSSR 62* [Proceedings from the Volga-Don archaeological expedition. Material and archaeological research in SSSR 62.] (Moscow, 1958), 151-226 (henceforth: Pletneva, *Pecenegi, torki i polovcy*); Svetlana Alexandrovna Pletneva, “Pecenegi, torki, polovcy” [Pechenegs, Turks and Polovtsy], in *Stepi Evrazii v epohu srednevekova. Arheologia SSSR* [The Eurasian steppes in the Middle Ages. Archaeology of the SSSR], ed. S.A. Pletneva (Moscow, 1981), 213-223.

¹⁸ Horváth, *A csengelei kunok*, 255-256; Pálóczi Horváth, *Hagyományok, kapcsolatok és hatások*, 71-95.

¹⁹ Pálóczi Horváth, *Hagyományok, kapcsolatok és hatások*, 26.

in the grave. The graves were oriented to the east.²¹ Other burial elements, such as the cauldrons placed in the graves (typical for the region between the Don and Donets rivers), again reinforce the hypothesis that there were ties between the Cumans in Eurasia and the Turkic peoples in Siberia and the Altay region.²² Certain types of horse harness, such as the thick bits, the wide stirrups with straight treads, or bone plates used for arranging and dividing leather straps were also brought to the Eastern European steppe by the Cuman-Kipchak tribes. Iron helmets and mail vest armors, also frequently found in Cuman noblemen's graves, reflect changes in nomadic warfare in the eleventh-twelfth century.²³

The terms White and Black Cumania appear in the sources in the twelfth century. These names may refer to a western and eastern branch of the same federation. White Cumania was the land of western tribes between the Dniester and Dnieper Rivers while Black Cumania was an alliance of eastern Cuman tribes around the Donets Basin. Another name, the Polovtsy is used in Russian chronicles for Cuman-Kipchak tribes living in the upper reaches of the Don River. These names are, again, debatable – they may signify an internal separation within the Cuman-Kipchak territories, but it has also been proposed that various names of the Cumans (Cuni, Cumani) were used for the Oghuz tribes as well.²⁴ Another explanation is that the terms Black and White as used here did not signify ethnic groups but rather a social stratification, the White being the leading elite of the Cuman-Kipchak society and the Black people the subjugated commoners.²⁵

The precise location that the Cumans who arrived in thirteenth-century Hungary originally came from is difficult to identify, mostly because the background of these groups is uncertain. Pletneva identifies the tribe of Kuthen (the khan who asked for asylum on the eve of the Mongol Invasion in Hungary) with a group that lived between the Dnieper and Don Rivers before they were defeated by the Mongols in the battle at the Kalkha River in 1223;²⁶ Polgár locates Kuthen's original campsite

someplace west of the Dnieper.²⁷ It is, nevertheless, certain that those people who crossed the Hungarian border and asked for help from the Hungarian king were actually tribal fragments brought together by the necessity of fleeing from the invading Mongol forces, and who most likely originated from different segments of the manifold tribal alliance characteristic of the steppe zone.²⁸

The linguist István Mándoky Kongur proposed that the people of Greater and Lesser Cumania spoke different dialects. In his view, the language spoken in Greater Cumania still retains a number of elements of the Kipchak-Turkic language, but Lesser Cumania seems to have been characterized by tribal fragments that were probably descendants of Oghuz groups who joined the Cumans on their journey to the Carpathian Basin, or were subjugated by them and brought along.²⁹ In fact, the presence of two main different dialects in the language of the Codex Cumanicus was suggested by Lajos Ligeti;³⁰ this also supports the impression that the population that migrated to Hungary and were labeled as Cumans, in fact, consisted of groups with diverse ethnic and linguistic backgrounds – although the discrepancies between them and the Hungarians may have been great enough to create an image of a homogenous entity of “the Other.” It is also worth mentioning here that Hungarian chroniclers of the time usually not only called the Cumans themselves Cuman but also the Oghuz and the Pechenegs, peoples subjugated by the Cuman-Kipchak tribal federation.³¹

1.2 Cuman economic life on the steppe before the migration to Hungary

There is little written evidence concerning Cumanian economic life in the vast area occupied by the Cuman-

²¹ Pálóczi Horváth, *Hagyományok, kapcsolatok és hatások*, 53-54; Pletneva, *Pecenegi, torki i polovcy*, 172-173; Fedorov-Davydov, *Kochevniky Vostochnoy Evropy*, 142-147, Tables 15-16.

²² Horváth, *A csengelei kunok*, 255; Pálóczi Horváth, *Hagyományok, kapcsolatok és hatások*, 62.

²³ Pálóczi Horváth, *Hagyományok, kapcsolatok és hatások*, 63.

²⁴ Horváth, *A csengelei kunok*, 246-247; Béla Kossányi, “Az úzok és a kománok történetéhez a XI-XII. században” [Notes on the history of the Oghuz and the Cumans in the 11th-12th c.], *Századok* 58/1-6 (1924), 519-537: 537.

²⁵ Pálóczi Horváth, *Hagyományok, kapcsolatok és hatások*, 40, footnote 17. Pálóczi Horváth builds on Györfly's theory who suggested a similar division between the White and Black Hungarians, the latter being other tribal fragments or former alliances that joined the “proper” Hungarians, called white in the sources. György Györfly, *István király és műve* [King Stephan and his work] 4th Edition. (Budapest: Balassi, 2013), 166.

²⁶ Svetlana Alexandrovna Pletneva, *Polovcy* [Polovtsy] (Moscow, 1990), 170, cited by Horváth, *A csengelei kunok*, 259.

²⁷ Szabolcs Polgár, “Kötöny, kun fejedelem” [Kuthen, a Cuman chieftain], in *Tanulmányok a középkori magyar történelemről: Az I. Medieviztikai PhD-konferencia (Szeged, 1999. július 2.) előadásai* [Studies on Hungarian medieval history: Proceedings of the 1st Medieval Studies Conference, Szeged, July 2 1999], eds. Sarolta Homonnai, Ferenc Piti and Ildikó Tóth (Szeged: Szegedi Középkorász Műhely, 1999), 91-102: 98.

²⁸ Horváth, *A csengelei kunok*, 259.

²⁹ István Mándoky Kongur, *A kun nyelv magyarországi emlékei*. [Remains of the Cuman language in Hungary] (Karcag, 1993), 113, 135-136, 151-152. (henceforth: Mándoky Kongur, *A kun nyelv magyarországi emlékei*) He also proposed that the geographical names Bodoglár and Pecsene have Oghuz connections. The latter name, he argues, refers to the name of the Pechenegs, who were first assimilated by the Oghuz and then joined the Cuman-Kipchaks. On this basis, he identified a small area around present-day Kisújszállás where Oghuz tribal fragments may have lived. Torma (and after him, also Horváth), however, warns that Mándoky Kongur may have preferred Greater Cumania as a researcher and saw Lesser Cumania as a region “too much influenced by the Oghuz language” for personal grounds. Thus, he concentrated on the Kipchak linguistic elements which, in his view, were better preserved in Greater Cumania. (József Torma, *Bérem bélé, íkem igő... Mándoky Kongur István emlékére* [Bérem bélé, íkem igő... Studies in the Honor of István Mándoky Kongur] (Karcag: Karcag Város Önkormányzata, 1999), 36 (henceforth: Torma, *Bérem bélé*); Horváth, *A csengelei kunok*, 261.)

³⁰ He hypothesized that the so-called “Italian part” and “German part” of the Codex reflect two thirteenth-century main dialects spoken by different Cuman groups with whom the missionaries came into contact. Lajos Ligeti, *A Codex Cumanicus mai kérdései* [Recent Debates on the Codex Cumanicus] (Budapest: Kőrösi Csoma Társaság, 1985), 19-23.

³¹ Czeglédy, *A kunok eredetéről*, 49.

Kipchak Federation, although many reports exist on the lifestyle of various nomadic tribes in the steppe zone. Medieval travelers and chroniclers such as Henry of Livonia, Robert of Clari, or William of Rubruck, give very similar accounts on the sustenance of nomadic societies, including the Cumans. These stories are sometimes highly stereotypical. Their attachment to the nomadic, “independent” way of life is sometimes even romanticized in these accounts.³² It is likely, though, that various forms of local subsistence were practiced in different regions in this huge area that lacked any centralized state power. Their position on the steppe was ideal from an economic point of view: they had access to extensive pastures and the goods of sedentary populations as well as opportunities both to trade and to raid. The khans and their retinue, supported by a military elite (the so-called *neugherii*, who later also served the Hungarian kings as *nyögrék*), ruled over a mass of commoners who were mainly involved in animal herding. It seems that before their migration to the Carpathian Basin, Cumans began to settle permanently in what were their previous winter camps, and became engaged in land cultivation. Important trade routes, such as the one between the cities of Khwarezm, Volga Bulgaria and Eastern Europe, and the one connecting Byzantine colonies with the Russian Principalities, crossed Cuman territory and presented opportunities for trade, tribute and raiding alike (although sometimes we only hear of these routes when they were endangered). The trans-steppe trade was, in fact, so important that it resumed immediately after the Mongol Conquest.³³ When the Mongol attack drove the Cumans westwards, the economy that disintegrated was probably a transitional form between nomadism and proper settled agriculture manifesting in various subtypes in accordance with the immediate local realities. All reports concerning the Cumans emphasize that their economy mostly relied on animal husbandry and looting, with little or no involvement in land cultivation, but at the same time, they participated in trade and there were commercial urban centers under their control.

The animal-based nomad economy operates in cycles, and although a temporary balance is possible, it is extremely vulnerable to fluctuations such as droughts, animal disease, extreme weather, the availability of appropriate pastures, trade opportunities with the settled population, or drying up of water resources. Moreover, these variables are not jeopardized by factors that operate synchronically, but each may be affected by many other factors, both

temporary and constant ones.³⁴ This situation led to a high level of instability where secondary countermeasures had to be established: not only primitive forms of agriculture, but also the practice of raiding and requesting tribute (of course, these were not only important in an economic, but also in a political and military context, which will not be discussed here).

Medieval contemporaries described the Cumans and Kipchaks in general terms as mobile people with animal herds. At the time of their migration to Hungary, there is scarcely any hint of their flocks except for general remarks made by Master Roger. Plano Carpini notes that the Cumans were pagans who did not till the soil but lived in tents and ate the produce of their animals.³⁵ He, however, was writing about Cumans reduced to slavery, living under Mongol rule. According to the account of the Fourth Crusade by Robert of Clari, Cumans did not plough or sow and lived only on meat, cheese and milk.³⁶ This is certainly an exaggeration but might signify a highly specialized economy that must have been dependent on outside resources and as such, could not have been self-sufficient. The Cumans’ expertise on animals and livestock management was greatly appreciated. According to the sources, even Cuman commoners were sometimes captured and commissioned to train horses or handle flocks.³⁷

In fact, very similar descriptions are found about other nomadic tribes in western Eurasia as well. In the ninth century, al-Yaqubi wrote about the Oghuz that they dwell in “ribbed domes”, whose “pegs are belts made from the skins of beasts and cows”, and “there is no agriculture in Turkistan except for millet... their food is mare’s milk and they eat its flesh and most of what they eat is the flesh of wild game...”³⁸ Al-Jahiz also commented on the Turkic peoples of ninth century Inner Asia saying, “so the Turks are nomads, dwellers in the wilderness and owners of beasts... they do not busy themselves with industry and merchandise and medicine and agriculture and engineering and forestry and architecture and irrigation and the raising of crops, but all their interest is in raids and incursions and hunting and riding and the fights of warriors and seeking for plunder and subduing countries...” He also adds that the Turkic peoples make objects themselves, from swords to saddles and arrows, and they “do not turn again and again to a manufacturer”. He also emphasizes

³² There is a widely cited story about the Kipchak prince Otrok. He was persuaded to return to the steppe by a bard who called him back to his “native land” and sang Kipchak songs to him. Although Otrok was moved neither by the words nor by the song, he began to weep when the bard presented him with herbs from the steppe, and finally he returned to his homeland. (Gerard Chaliand, *Nomadic Empires. From Mongolia to the Danube* (London: Transaction Publishers, 2004), 52.)

³³ Thomas S. Noonan, “Rus, Pechenegs, and Polovtsy: Economic Interaction Along the Steppe Frontier in the Pre-Mongol Era” *Russian History* 19/1-4 (1992), 301-327: 321 (henceforth: Noonan, Rus, Pechenegs, and Polovtsy)

³⁴ Anatoly M. Khazanov, *Nomads and the Outside World*, Second Edition (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984), 72-75 (henceforth: Khazanov, *Nomads and the Outside World*)

³⁵ Christopher Dawson (ed), *Mission to Asia*, Medieval Academy Reprints for Teaching 8. (Toronto – Buffalo – London: University of Toronto Press, 1980), 58 (henceforth: Plano Carpini, ed. Dawson)

³⁶ Sándor Csernus and Annamária Cs. Tóth (ed. and transl.), *Robert de Clari – Konstantinápoly hódolatása* [The conquest of Constantinople] A középkori francia történeti irodalom remekei 1. (Budapest: Balassi, 2013), 89. (henceforth: Robert of Clari ed. Csernus and Cs. Tóth)

³⁷ Noonan, Rus, Pechenegs and Polovtsy, 315.

³⁸ David Christian, *A History of Russia, Central Asia and Mongolia*. Vol.1. *Inner Eurasia from Prehistory to the Mongol Empire* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 355 (henceforth: Christian, *A History of Russia*)



Fig. 1.1.2 a-b Cumans moving around in yurt-like carts in the illustrations of the Radziwill Chronicle (or Königsberg Chronicle), fifteenth century. The manuscript is available at commons.wikimedia.org (accessed October 24, 2017).

what skilled horsemen they are.³⁹ Ibn Battuta recorded in the mid-fourteenth century that north of the Black Sea, in the land of the Kipchaks, the Turkic people ate no bread, only some thin soup prepared from millet into which they put meat. The meat of horses was consumed most, followed by mutton. They also consumed mare's milk (koumiss) in large quantities.⁴⁰ The same was noted by Plano Carpini among the Mongols: he wrote that they had "neither bread nor herbs nor vegetables or anything else, nothing but meat", and drank mare's milk as well as the milk of ewes, cows, goats and camels. This, however, is most likely an exaggeration, because humans are omnivores and need at least some plant-based food to survive. Later Plano Carpini contradicts himself and reports that in the wintertime the Mongols boil millet in water and make a thin soup, and exist on it almost exclusively.⁴¹ In fact, due to the lack of reliable sources it is hard to tell how much plant-based food was consumed by the Cumans during their life in the steppe region (not to mention that the dietary composition must have varied according to social status, of which there is absolutely no information available). Anthropological studies revealed a wide variety of dietary adaptations including diets with minimal amount of grains and vegetables and those that significantly relied on plant-based foods as supplements.⁴² This must have depended on a number of factors such as the size and composition of the animal herd, local climatic conditions, opportunities to hunt and gather, or trading options. Khazanov emphasizes that, although such theories exist, it is not possible for nomads to survive solely on dairy products and meat; he cites an example from the eighteenth-nineteenth century, when the khans of Khiva (in present-day Uzbekistan) inflicted a severe punishment on Turkmen by denying them access to markets where they could buy the grain they needed for everyday subsistence.⁴³ It must be kept in mind that although culture may overwrite a number of practicalities, nutritional needs cannot be among these; it was observed among the Tuareg in the Near East that weeks or months spent without proper vegetable foods cause fatigue and stomach pain in the population.⁴⁴ Simple biological necessities make it unlikely that Cumans could have survived on a diet that some written sources suggest.

³⁹ C.T. Harley Walker, "Jahiz of Basra to al-Fath ibn Khaqan on the »Exploits of the Turks and the Army of the Khalifate in General«, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* 1915/4, 631-697: 684-686.

⁴⁰ István Boga (ed), *Ibn Battúta zarándokútja és vándorlása* [Ibn Battuta's pilgrimages and wanderings], Világjárók – Klasszikus útleírások V (Budapest: Gondolat, 1964), 186. (henceforth: Boga, Ibn Battúta zarándokútja) *The travels of Ibn Battuta, A.D. 1325-1354 / translated with revisions and notes from the Arabic text edited by C. Defremery and B.R. Sanguinetti by Gibb; translation completed with annotations by C.F. Beckingham.*

⁴¹ Plano Carpini ed. Dawson, 16-17.

⁴² Khazanov, *Nomads and the Outside World*, 52-69.

⁴³ Khazanov, *Nomads and the Outside World*, 53.

⁴⁴ Johannes Nicolaisen, "Slavery among the Tuareg in the Sahara. A preliminary analysis of the structure," in *Ecology and Culture of the Pastoral Tuareg: With Particular Reference to the Tuareg of Ahaggar and Ayr*, Nationalmuseets Skrifter, Etnografisk Raekke 9. (Copenhagen: National Museum, 1963), 209; cited by Khazanov, *Nomads and the Outside World*, 57.

From the beginning of the eighth century significant changes took place along various geographical, religious, political and economic factors, which resulted in the emergence of different pastoral traditions, the Turkic tradition in southern Central Eurasia being one of these. This was gradually characterized by a highly selective breeding of horses, and the use of animal food supplements such as beans, grains, fodder, melons or animal fat, partly as a result of interaction with Arabic and Persian cultural entities.⁴⁵ For such specialization, firm ties to sedentary populations and channels for obtaining other commodities were a precondition. This, however, does not mean that on their part Cumans did not practice any kind of land cultivation.

The *Codex Cumanicus* contains a surprisingly extensive vocabulary connected to plant cultivation, which Györfly explained by the fact that the wordlist was based on the language spoken in, more or less, settled Cuman communities in the Crimea.⁴⁶ Plant species such as millet, barley, wheat, rye, hemp, rice, spelt, flax, onion, garlic, carrots, squash, melons, grapes, apple, pear, plum and walnuts are included in the wordlist, along with expressions for chaff, straw, and plow land.⁴⁷ Of course, the fact that these words existed in the Cuman tongue does not necessarily imply that they cultivated these crops. However, although there is no mention of Cuman agriculture in the sources at all (only millet is mentioned which they cultivated around their summer camps because it ripened very fast),⁴⁸ basic agricultural tools, such as the plow and the plowshare, are included in the wordlist. Interestingly, words associated with fruit production are of Persian origin which indicates that this practice was not an internal development but learned from other, more sedentary, communities.⁴⁹

They must have been able to practice small-scale farming that fit within their cycles of seasonal migration.⁵⁰ Draught-resistant crops such as spring wheat, millet and oat could be cultivated even in areas generally deemed unfit for agriculture. Archaeological evidence suggests plant cultivation in the steppe region (in Manchuria, Inner

⁴⁵ Ruth I. Meserve, "On medieval and Early Modern Science and Technology in Central Eurasia," in *Cultural Contact, History and Ethnicity in Inner Asia*, ed. by Michael Gervers and Wayne Schleppe, Toronto Studies in Central and Inner Asia No. 2. (Toronto: Joint Centre for Asia Pacific Studies, 1996), 49-70: 56-58.

⁴⁶ György Györfly, "A kipszaki kun társadalom a Codex Cumaminus alapján" [The Cuman-Kipchak society based on the Codex Cumanicus], in *A magyarság keleti elemei* [Eastern elements of the Hungarian people] (Budapest: Gondolat, 1990). 242-273: 244 (henceforth: Györfly, A kipszaki kun társadalom).

⁴⁷ Györfly, A kipszaki kun társadalom, 244-245.

⁴⁸ Györfly, A kipszaki kun társadalom, 244. It is not specified which primary source Györfly used here.

⁴⁹ Györfly, A kipszaki kun társadalom, 245.

⁵⁰ According to ethnographic observations, nomadic Mongol families utilized wooden plows, and then broke up the clods with their hands. Wheat, barley and rye seeds were also sown by hand. After sowing, they moved to the summer pastures, and returned to the seeded soil in the autumn, when crops were ripe. (András Róna-Tas, "Some data on the agriculture of the Mongols", in *Opuscula Ethnologica Memoriae Ludovici Biró Sacra*, eds. Tibor Bodrogi and L. Boglár (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1959), 443-472: 449.)

and Northern Mongolia, South Siberia, the Trans-Baikal region, in present-day Kazakhstan, north of the Black Sea and in the Pontic Steppe) in the Bronze and Iron Age. The climatic change that resulted in drier seasons, desiccation and lower temperatures from the end of the Neolithic did not actually make steppe agriculture impossible.⁵¹ Therefore, it is more realistic to see the steppe zone as a place where various nomadic tribal subsystems as well as settled and semi-settled agro-pastoralists interacted and depended on each other. There would have been various options to procure staple foods other than animal-based products. The ways these foods were produced or procured must have been linked to the amount consumed and food preferences as well.

Commodities other than animal products were supplied mainly through trade. The complex web of central places in pre-Mongol Rus, and the agricultural production that served them, provided the supplementary commodities the Cumans needed.⁵² Some of these places were even under Cuman control including the city of Sudak, where Cumans bought fabrics in exchange for furs of foxes, beavers and squirrels, as well as slaves, which they sold to Levantine merchants.⁵³ Similar practices were also recorded in connection with the Uighurs, who exchanged tens of thousands of horses for silk⁵⁴ or fur to the Chinese.⁵⁵ The same was recorded of the Oghuz who traded with the Rus in livestock for luxury goods.⁵⁶ Grave goods in noble graves from the Pontic steppe yielded objects of Oriental, Russian and Western origin, which suggest far-flung contacts, although these goods could have been procured by raiding as well. These materials were, however, all luxury goods and commodities not needed for everyday subsistence. Thus, these data do not reveal much about the commoners, but rather suggest how the elite procured items intended for status display; the sources mainly dwell on these. The way Cumans procured plant-based staple food is, however, not elaborated upon, even though it is clear that their diet could not have been exclusively animal-based. Anna Komnena mentions “the Comans who frequented the place [the city of Cherson] for trading purposes and

for carrying home necessities from that town”,⁵⁷ which probably testifies to the role of trade in securing everyday items they themselves did not produce. (In fact, Györfy interprets this piece of data as evidence that Cumans only practiced primitive agriculture. In this way, grain was supplied by trade.⁵⁸) This suggests that the Cuman economy was not self-sufficient but intertwined with intensive commercial relations, which at the same time, allowed the mobile population to specialize in animal-related activities. She also writes about the Cumans who were “dispersed for foraging purposes over the adjacent territories”⁵⁹ (this, however, was an exceptional case of finding subsistence in a war situation, which had probably little to do with the normal economy). Rubruck observed that grain as well as animals were sold in the capital of the Mongols, Karakorum; however, he reported that grain was only brought there in lower quantities (which means that it must have been procured from channels other than trade).⁶⁰

Steppe horses seem to have been a pivotal commodity of trade between the Slavic merchants and Mongols, Cumans and Pechenegs; “Tartar horses” were held in high esteem.⁶¹ According to preserved price lists in the late twelfth-century Kievan law code *Pravda Rus'skaia*, horses were the most valuable animals in the Rus' economy: one as yet unbroken stallion was equal in price to two two-year-old cattle, a milking cow, or ten sheep, goats or pigs, while a trained horse was twice as expensive. Interestingly, however, although several horse types are mentioned, the “steppe horse” acquired from nomads is not listed as a separate category, although they were extremely sought after at that time⁶² (probably because these horses were also very variable in terms of usefulness, age, temperament and skills). Ibn Battuta, traveling north of the Black Sea in the mid-fourteenth century, reported that the tribes living there had many horses, and some owners even had thousands of them. A complex and sophisticated web of trade emerged

⁵¹ Nicola Di Cosmo, “Ancient Inner Asian Nomads: Their Economic Basis and Its Significance in Chinese History,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 53/4 (1994), 1092-1126: 1096-1104, 1110-1111 (henceforth: Di Cosmo, Ancient Inner Asian Nomads)

⁵² David B. Miller, “The Many Frontiers of the Kievan Rus,” *Russian History* 19/1-4 (1992), 231-260: 235-237.

⁵³ Charles-Francois Defrémery, “Fragments de géographes et d'historiens Arabes et Persans inédit, relatifs aux anciens peuples du Caucase et de la Russie méridionale.” *Journal Asiatique* 4th Series, vol. 13, Paris, 1849. 457. Online edition: https://archive.org/stream/FragmentsDeGeographesEtDhistoriensArabesEtPersansIneditRelatifsAux/JA_Defremery_Caucasus_djvu.txt Accessed 11.30.2014; Victor Spinei, *The Great Migrations in the East and South of Europe from the Ninth to the Thirteenth Century* (Cluj-Napoca: Romanian Cultural Institute, 2003), 225 (henceforth: Spinei, *The Great Migrations*)

⁵⁴ It seems, however, that these horses were not as valued as those of the Tatars, as they were labeled useless by the Chinese, and more was paid for them than they were worth. This may signify the importance of diplomatic gestures in trade. (Christian, *A History of Russia*, 267, 271.)

⁵⁵ Christian, *A History of Russia*, 271.

⁵⁶ Christian, *A History of Russia*, 360.

⁵⁷ Elizabeth A. Dawes ed. and tr. *Anna Komnena, Alexiad*. (London: Routledge, 1928) Book 10/II, 238. Online edition: <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/basis/AnnaKomnena-Alexiad10.asp> Accessed Dec 02 2014. (henceforth: Anna Komnena, *Alexiad*) It must be kept in mind, however, that Komnena's account also has a highly stereotypical flavor concerning Cumans; according to her, they are “barbarians [who] have lightheadedness and changeableness as natural characteristics” (Anna Komnena, *Alexiad*, Book 10/III, 241), and who were “longing eagerly to gulp down draughts of human blood and take their fill of human flesh, as well as to carry off much booty from our country” (Anna Komnena, *Alexiad*, Book 10/II, 238).

⁵⁸ Györfy, *A kipszaki kun társadalom*, 244.

⁵⁹ Anna Komnena, *Alexiad*, Book 10/IV, 246.

⁶⁰ Rubruck ed. Jackson and Morgan, 221. “The town is enclosed by a mud wall and has four gates. At the east gate are sold millet and other kinds of grain, though they are seldom imported; at the western, sheep and goats are on sale; at the southern, cattle and wagons; and at the northern, horses.”

⁶¹ Ann M. Kleimola, “Good breeding, Muscovite style: Horse culture in Early Modern Rus,” in: *Forschungen zur Osteuropäische Geschichte*, ed. Carsten Kumke, Historische Veröffentlichungen – Band 50. Osteuropa-Institut der Freien Universität Berlin (Berlin: Harrasowitz Verlag, 1995), 199-238: 201-202.

⁶² Daniel H. Kaiser, “The Economy of the Kievan Rus: Evidence from the *Pravda Rus'skaia*,” in *Ukrainian Economic History: Interpretive Essays*, ed. I.S. Koropeckyj. Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute – Sources and Documents Series (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 37-57: 39-40.

between the Cumans and the Rus' elite, with good quality horses being the most important commodity (partly due to the growing importance of mounted cavalry in warfare).⁶³ As it was of pivotal importance for the Cumans not to overgraze pastures with surplus horses and thus endanger the natural resources needed for animal production, their export had to be more or less continuous. The need both for pastures and for agricultural products also required a fine balancing act: as much as Cumans needed to keep the Rus' peasants out of their valuable grasslands, they also had to make sure that the agricultural activity of these peasants continued undisturbed.

It is important to note, however, that although there was a lively trade with the settled communities, the Cumans never developed such an organized system of trade as did the Khazars and West Turks, simply because there was no central state power which could have provided a framework for a safe international market with major hubs that could be conveniently approached by many routes. On the contrary, the tribes were divided into different tribal units which all had their own leaders. Similarly to the Pechenegs, the Cumans could not establish a central power in the form of a khaganate or state formation (although there were attempts to establish a centralized power in the early thirteenth century which was then swept away by the Mongol attacks).⁶⁴ This was due to the relative strength of competing local leaders who jostled each other for political influence and control over pastures (although sometimes they did form temporary military alliances with each other).⁶⁵

Central places for commerce, such as Cherson or Sudaq in the Crimea, played an important role in the trans-steppe trade, and were sometimes protected by the Cuman khans. In 1226, the Rus and the Cumans formed a military alliance against a Seldjuk attack on Sudaq.⁶⁶ Cumans were normally present in this city as middlemen and collected fees and taxes for their "services" and "protection".⁶⁷ It is, however, not clear how these market hubs influenced Cuman settlement. For the Uighurs it has been hypothesized that towns that served as military garrisons, where in wartime nomadic tribesmen took refuge, later became centers for agriculture (which archaeological findings also testified

to).⁶⁸ It is not clear whether the Cumans partook of this process. It is probable, however, that the winter camps, like embryonic towns, were places where impoverished pastoralists could find means of sustenance after they lost their livestock.

In times when military campaigns were frequent, normal exchange relations were not possible. It was recorded that Cumans sometimes blocked the roads between Byzantium and the Rus,⁶⁹ which must have made it more difficult to establish regular trade with these states. Anna Komnena mentions the city of Cherson which worked as a Byzantine-nomadic trade hub in the eleventh century, where nomads bought various goods.⁷⁰ Although trade must have been controlled by the elite, simple commoners may have been involved as well. Rubruck notes that Mongol commoners also traded in sheep and skins in order to obtain grain, clothes or other commodities.⁷¹

In cases when the nomads' demand for certain goods such as cereals could not be met by trade with settled neighbors, raiding was another option. In fact, it has been hypothesized that Inner Asian nomads regularly raided the Chinese due to their dependency on imports.⁷² Raiding presented a viable alternative to trade in times of war. Moreover, commodities to be sold later could be procured through looting as well. Villehardouin writes in his chronicle of the Fourth Crusade that Cumans "retired, having done according to their will in the land, and won many good horses and good hawberks",⁷³ and "seized the cattle off the land, and took captive men, women and children, and destroyed the cities and castles."⁷⁴ The emphasis on these activities may, however, be inherent in the nature of our sources: the aim was not to provide a detailed account on the everyday life of Cuman tribes but to document the military troops that appeared as raiders.

The usually highly negative depiction of Cumans and Pechenegs in the sources of the Kievan Rus obviously oversimplifies a complex relationship between the Rus and the nomads, which was not only entangled with economic interests, but also with political and military alliances.⁷⁵ Noonan came to the conclusion that the devastation was

⁶³ Igor Iakovlevich Froianov, "Large-scale Ownership of Land and the Russian Economy in the Tenth to Twelfth Centuries," *Soviet Studies in History* 24/4 (1986), 9-82; Noonan, Rus, Pechenegs and Polovtsy, 309.

⁶⁴ Peter B. Golden, "Aspects of the Nomadic Factor in the Economic Development of the Kievan Rus" in *Ukrainian Economic History. Interpretive Essays*, ed. I.S. Koropecyjk. Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute – Sources and Documents Series (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 58-101: 78-79 (henceforth: Golden, Aspects of the Nomadic Factor)

⁶⁵ Noonan, Rus, Pechenegs, and Polovtsy, 305.

⁶⁶ Noonan, Rus, Pechenegs, and Polovtsy, 324-325.

⁶⁷ Golden, Aspects of the Nomadic Factor, 98.

⁶⁸ Albert Kamalov, "Material Culture of the Nomadic Uighurs of the Eighth-Ninth Centuries is Central Asia" in *Religion, Customary Law, and Nomadic Technology. Papers Presented at the Central and Inner Asian Seminar, University of Toronto, 1 May 1998 and 23 April 1999*. Ed. Michael Gervers and Wayne Schlepp. Toronto Studies in Central and Inner Asia no. 4. (Toronto: Joint Centre for Asia Pacific Studies, 2000), 27-33: 30.

⁶⁹ Spinei, *The Great Migrations*, 230.

⁷⁰ Anna Komnena, *Alexiad*. Book 10/II, 238.

⁷¹ Noonan, Rus, Pechenegs and Polovtsy, 318-319; Rubruck ed. Jackson and Morgan, 84.

⁷² Di Cosmo, *Ancient Inner Asian Nomads*, 1093.

⁷³ Frank T. Marzials ed and tr. *Memoirs of the Crusades by Villehardouin and Joinville* (London: J.M. Dent, 1908), 108. Online edition: <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/basis/villehardouin.asp> (henceforth: Villehardouin ed. Marzials)

⁷⁴ Villehardouin ed. Marzials, 111.

⁷⁵ Golden even concluded that large-scale violent actions were not typical for nomad-sedentary interactions of western Eurasia and encounters with Cumans and Pechenegs were largely peaceful. (Golden, Aspects of the Nomadic Factor, 86.)

rather caused by frequent nomadic raiding inherent in the Rus' political and military system, a system in which the Cumans and Pechenegs took over the role of the Vikings as mercenaries; he even stated that these were acts of "licensed and controlled predation".⁷⁶ Moreover, raiding not only served as a form of supply for the nomads, but was, in fact, mutual. There are records testifying to Kievan princes stealing livestock, especially horses, from the Cumans, when these animals could not be acquired by any other means (such as trade).⁷⁷ In addition, as there was no centralized state to coordinate needs and exert control, the Cuman khans could simply raid horses off each other if necessary. Noonan hypothesized that large-scale horse stealing must have been common in the eleventh-thirteenth century, not only between the Cumans and the Rus, but between various Cuman tribes as well.⁷⁸

Human trade – that is, trade in slaves and serfs – was also an important source of income. Taking hostages from the civil population and using or selling these people as slaves comes up often in the accounts. Accounts from the eleventh-century Pontic steppe reveal that the Kipchaks regularly took Christians as prisoners of war and used them as slaves.⁷⁹ Russian chronicles mention that the Cumans' military campaigns aimed to capture as many slaves as possible and then to ask ransom for them or sell them. Altogether 5,000 slaves were captured during one campaign according to a Georgian chronicle.⁸⁰ This means that the slave trade must have significantly contributed to their economy, either as commodities or in the work force. Those workers who could not be used in the nomadic economy were sold on the markets of the north coast of the Black Sea and, thus, contributed to the trade with Crimean markets. It was also customary to capture members of the elite – both on the Rus' and on the Cumans' side – who then could be ransomed for large amount of wealth.⁸¹ Pelts (especially those of local squirrel and beaver, but also those of the more valuable foxes) sold along with slaves are also mentioned several times in the sources.⁸²

The local division of labor in terms of agricultural production versus animal herding is an issue that must be raised. It is possible that tasks were ethnically or socially divided, serfs or slaves carrying out small-scale land cultivation, while the Cuman aristocracy and most commoners stayed mobile with their activities rather

organized around livestock management. It may have been included in the Cuman Laws in Hungary in 1279 that Cumans had to set free all Christian slaves they captured in the country (although they could retain their foreign slaves).⁸³ However, it is interesting that the medieval sources usually mention slaves and captives as serfs kept around the household or soldiers sent to the front lines in battle, not as peasants toiling on the land. Therefore it is questionable if they were, in fact, used for such tasks, and how being deprived of their slaves really affected the Cuman economic activities after their settlement in Hungary.

There are ethnographic examples where nomadic families do not use serfs but distribute the tasks among themselves. Among the Khalkha Mongols in the early twentieth century, poorer tribesmen helped the rich families with farming and supervising the crops while the herders were away with the animals.⁸⁴ In fact, the transition from animal-based sustenance and plant cultivation may have been viewed differently in different communities. Vainshtein observed among Tuvinian nomads in southern Siberia that engaging in tillage was not the result of impoverishment, cattle loss or lower status, as hypothesized for the Kazakhs or the Mongols of the Golden Horde. In fact, a precondition for land cultivation is stored grain, suitable pieces of land,

⁸³ Although this piece of text is only preserved in the second Cuman Law whose authenticity has been questioned, this detail seems realistic. "*Ceterum, super articulo restitutionis captivorum Christianorum, quem dominus legatus precipuum et maximum pre ceteris mente reputabat, ad nostram et venerabilium patrum episcoporum et ceterorum prelatorum ac baronum nostrorum instanciam, idem dominus legatus paternaliter condescendit hoc modo: quod captivos, quos in regno et terris nostris Christianos quoquo modo retinebant, precise et absolute reddere, nec retinere tenebuntur; alios vero captivos suos, in extraneis regnis captivatos, retinebunt.*" See Nóra Berend, "Az 1279-i »kun törvények« szövege és keletkezés körülményei" [The text and creation of the Cuman Laws of 1279] in *A Jászkunság kutatása 2000. Tudományos konferencia a Kiskun Múzeumban*. [Research of the Ias-Cuman area. A scholarly conference held in the Kiskun Museum], eds. Erzsébet Bánkiné Molnár, Edit Hortiné Bathó, and Erika Kiss (Jászberény-Kiskunfélegyháza: Kiskun Múzeum, 2002), 147-154 (henceforth: Berend, *Az 1279-i kun törvények*); Gyárfás, *A jász-kunok*, vol. 2, 441; Gábor Hatházi, "Halas kun székközpont és magyar mezőváros a középkorban" [Halas, a Cuman seat center and Hungarian market town in the Middle Ages] in *Kiskunhalas története I. Tanulmányok Kiskunhalasról a kezdetektől a török kor végéig* [The history of Kiskunhalas. Vol. 1. Studies on Kiskunhalas from the beginnings to the end of the Ottoman Turkish Era], eds. József Ö. Kovács and Aurél Szakál (Kiskunhalas: Kiskunhalas Városi Önkormányzat, 2000), 169-302: 182-183 (henceforth: Hatházi, *Halas kun székközpont*)

⁸⁴ In this community farming was a combined operation by wealthy and poor families alike. An area was plowed and planted, then the wealthier families left with their animals and moved to their summer pastures, while the poor families remained to supervise the crops, keeping their own animals nearby. At harvest time, the wealthy families returned, and after harvest they compensated the helpers with part of the crop. This form of labor distribution was indispensable if the families had large herds: sheep required constant supervision during the day throughout the year and horses required constant night surveillance during five months of the year after the foals were born. Moreover, during the summer there was an intensified milking period for both sheep and horses. Cattle herds were less problematic. A combination of horse and sheep herding was difficult, and a large number of people were needed in herd management. Camps that were wealthy in sheep and cattle and had means to support dependent, poorer families and herdsmen as seasonal assistants could maintain large herds of horses. Herbert Harold Vreeland, *Mongol Communities and Kinship Structure*, Behavior Science Monographs (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1962), 42, 46.

⁷⁶ Noonan, *Rus, Pechenegs, and Polovtsy*, 302, 316.

⁷⁷ Noonan, *Rus, Pechenegs, and Polovtsy*, 311-313.

⁷⁸ Noonan, *Rus, Pechenegs and Polovtsy*, 312.

⁷⁹ The Laurentian Chronicle reports on a Cuman raid of the town of Torchesk, 65 km south of Kiev, in 1093: "The Polovtsians [that is, the Cumans – K.L.] after seizing the town, burned it. They divided up the people and led them to their dwelling places, to their own relatives and kin. Many Christians suffered..." This account is even more interesting as the inhabitants of this town were mainly Pechenegs and Oghuz, and the story shows how the Kipchak elite displaced the Pechenegs from their ruling status in the steppe zone. (Christian, *A History of Russia*, 357.)

⁸⁰ Spinei, *The Great Migrations*, 232.

⁸¹ Noonan, *Rus, Pechenegs and Polovtsy*, 315.

⁸² Janet Martin, "The Land of Darkness and the Golden Horde. The fur trade under the Mongols, XIII-XIVth Centuries" *Cahiers du Monde russe et soviétique* 19/4 (1978), 401-421: 404-405.

equipment and draft animals; therefore, poorer families on their own usually could not start land cultivation, and even if they tried, the rent of draft animals and grain for sowing cost a large part of the harvest.⁸⁵ Although the sources are silent on this matter, it may be hypothesized that in the Cuman case, land cultivation – regardless of the extent to which it was practiced – was carried out at the commission of the richer families, either by foreign servants/slaves or other, less wealthy members of the tribe. Their production was then supplemented by grain and other plant-based food by trade.

Tributes also provided a form of income. The aristocratic ties to the Rus' elite, a form of military alliance reinforced by a series of intermarriages, must have accelerated the flow of certain goods in the form of non-commercial exchange such as dowries and gifts. These could add up to considerable amounts. Although this form of income was definitely limited to a narrow stratum of Cuman society, it contributed to the elite's wealth and thus to the maintenance of their control over commoners.

As we have seen, the available written sources on the Cumans' economy mainly discuss elite activities, while little is revealed on how animal herding, trade and land cultivation was coordinated on an everyday level. It is certain, however, that Cuman economy was not completely self-sufficient at the time they were forced to migrate westwards, but dependent on outside resources.

1.3 The Cumans' arrival in Hungary and the steps of integration into feudal society⁸⁶

In the years predating their arrival in Hungary, the Cumans led a mobile, nomadic lifestyle on the steppe. Their culture, language, belief system, and customs must have differed significantly from those of other contemporary groups in the region, such as the Hungarians. It must be noted, however, that they had intensive contacts with Christian states upon their appearance on the southern borders of the Russian Principalities in the mid-eleventh century; they also frequently came into conflict with the Hungarians. This, however, also meant that by the end of the twelfth century they were acquainted with Christianity, partly because from the early thirteenth century onwards mendicant orders showed a great interest in steppe peoples,

especially the Cumans and Tatars.⁸⁷ Moreover, the Cumans had already become accustomed to forming alliances with foreign states or peoples whose culture and language was different from their own. As we have seen in the previous subchapter, the Cuman-Kipchak Confederation, a vast territory habited by Turkic-speaking tribes north of the Black Sea in the eleventh and twelfth century, was a loose alliance of ethnically diverse groups.⁸⁸ This must have brought a linguistic and cultural assimilation between populations of different origins. In some cases, these tribes were only brought together during the slow westward movements fuelled by the Mongol expansion. After the battle at the Kalkha River in 1223, the Mongols viewed Cumania as their territory and the Cumans as their subjects, and thus, a rapid westward movement of the steppe population began. A small Cuman community under the leadership of Khan Bortz had already been baptized and made an allegiance with the Hungarian king in 1227, as they sought protection from the growing Mongol threat; thereafter, Duke Béla (the *rex junior*; and later Béla IV, king of Hungary) began to use the title *rex Cumaniae*.⁸⁹ As a devastating military conflict with the Mongols seemed inevitable, another Cuman khan, Kuthen, asked for asylum in Hungary in 1239, and entered the kingdom with a large group of people. By that time, missionary activities and the establishment of the Cuman bishopric in Milkov under the jurisdiction of the Hungarian Church resulted in closer Cuman-Hungarian connections.

The first clashes between the Cuman and Hungarian population in their long history of coexistence, reported on mostly by Master Roger, had at least four main aspects. The political component involved the impact Cumans had on the struggle between royal power and the aristocracy. The conversion of the newcomers to Christianity, an issue that comes up again and again in the textual sources, as well as the “ethnic” component (language, attire, pagan customs), must also have played a role in the way they

⁸⁵ Sevyan Vainshtein, *Nomads of South Siberia: The Pastoral Economies of Tuva* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 158.

⁸⁶ Arguments in this subchapter were also discussed in an article: Kyra Lyublyanovics, “Spies of the enemy, pagan herders and vassals most welcome: Cuman - Hungarian relations in the 13th century”, in *Expulsion and Diaspora Formation: Religious and Ethnic Identities in Flux from Antiquity to the Seventeenth Century*, ed. John Tolan, RELMIN 5 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2015), 31-49.

⁸⁷ The first missionaries sent to the Cumans were Dominicans; it is uncertain in which year they launched their missionary work but most probably it was in 1221. Their work was extensively supported by the Hungarian king for obvious political reasons. The friars were very active among the Cumans in the 1220s and by 1228 the first Cuman bishopric had been established, probably in Milkov, Moldavia. (The sources predating the Mongol Invasion do not mention the name of this town; it first appears in the sources in 1279.) (Ioan Ferent, *A kunok és püspökségük* [The Cumans and their bishopric] (Budapest: Szent István Társulat, 1981), 123-138 (henceforth: Ferent, *A kunok és püspökségük*); László Makkai, *A milkói (kún) püspökség és népei* [The (Cuman) bishopric in Milkov and its peoples.] (Debrecen: Pannonia, 1936), 10-18; 26, footnote 32.) Later, when the Cuman migration was over, missionary tasks were taken up by the Franciscan order. They were active among Hungarian Cumans from the late thirteenth century onwards, following the order of the pope. (István Gyárfás, *A jász-kunok története* [The history of Cumans and Iasians] Vols 1-4. (Budapest – Kecskemét - Szolnok, 1870-1885), vol. 2, 432 (henceforth: Gyárfás, *A jász-kunok*)

⁸⁸ Spinei, *The Great Migrations*, 234-236.

⁸⁹ Gyárfás, *A jász-kunok*, vol. 2, 257; András Pálóczi Horváth, *Pechenegs, Cumans, Iasians. Steppe Peoples in Medieval Hungary* (Budapest: Hereditas-Corvina, 1989), 48 (henceforth: Pálóczi Horváth, *Pechenegs, Cumans, Iasians*)

were perceived as uninvited strangers.⁹⁰ A fourth, economic aspect, the damage the Cumans' herds inflicted on crops and the fact that they took Christians as prisoners, also contributed to an escalation of conflicts.⁹¹ This resulted in waves of Cuman emigration during the thirteenth century. It is important to note here that even though Cumans had experience forming alliances with various political and military forces, they never formed a state.⁹² Now, however, they were facing a feudal kingdom with a host community much bigger than their own. Thus, conflicts were probably inevitable.

King Béla IV needed help against the approaching Mongol armies and hoped to use the Cumans as military allies. Cumans had cavalry troops superior to European armies in terms of agility and their knowledge of steppe warfare.⁹³ Moreover, Béla IV also needed supporters in his struggle against influential Hungarian lords, as he aimed

to stabilize his own royal position.⁹⁴ He tried to create bonds quickly with the Cuman nobility and turn them into reliable vassals. Thus, Cumans played an ambiguous political role right from the beginning and the Hungarian aristocracy looked at their new allies with suspicion. They were mass-baptized with Béla IV acting as their godfather, and received a collective legal status that was highly dependent on the king.⁹⁵ In return, they were granted with privileges usually given to *hospes* peoples: they were partly freed from the obligation to pay taxes and possessed a level of internal autonomy (they were free to make their own legislation and jurisdiction).

Our most important written source on the initial conflicts is the *Epistola in miserabile carmen* by Master Roger of Apulia. He saw the roots of all problems in the king's attitude that favored Cumans in all his decisions. The Cumans, on the other hand, are mostly represented through stereotypes in this text. It is uncertain how much first-hand information Master Roger had on the Cuman commoners, but he definitely had connections to the royal court and so the ties to the Cuman aristocracy must have been well-known to him. He mentions that the king tried to put an end to the conflicts between commoners of the two peoples by making an agreement to disperse the Cumans throughout the country, believing that small communities would be easier to handle than a single, large Cuman block.⁹⁶ The Cuman leadership was probably unaware that they now played a role in a bitter political struggle. Shortly after they arrived in the country, news reached the Hungarian court that there were Cumans in the Mongol army (which was, in fact, true: these were Cuman captives, reported also by John of Plano Carpini⁹⁷ and Thomas of Split⁹⁸). It was immediately raised that the Cumans who asked for asylum

⁹⁰ Interestingly, the so-called Cuman Laws issued in 1279 that regulated Cuman-Hungarian co-existence, originally said nothing about attire, hairstyle or other factors usually connected with ethnicity. These factors are only mentioned in the "Second Cuman Law", which was long taken to be the final version of these laws although its authenticity was questioned by Nóra Berend (see footnote 85 above). A letter of Pope Nicholas III from 1279 reveals that Cumans were not willing to reject their traditional hairstyle, and finally the papal legate (with whose help the Cuman Laws were issued) dropped the question. (Augustino Theiner, *Vetera Monumenta Historica Hungariam Sacram Illustrantia. Tomus I.* (Rome, 1859), Vol.1, 342 (henceforth: Theiner, *Vetera Monumenta Historica*) It must be added, however, that the question of the second law's authenticity has not yet been settled. Péter Langó argues that the charter contains too many authentic details of thirteenth-century documents, of which an eighteenth-century forger probably could not have been aware of (Péter Langó, "Kun László kun törvényei. Megjegyzések a kunok középkori jogi státusáról" [The Cuman Laws of Ladislaus the Cuman. Notes on the medieval Cuman legal status] In: *Jászok és kunok a magyarok között. Ünnepi kötet Bánkiné Molnár Erzsébet tiszteletére* [Iasians and Cumans among the Hungarians. Studies in honor of Erzsébet Bánkiné Molnár], eds. Edit Bathó, László Faragó and Magdolna Kókai. Jászszági Könyvtár 6. (Jászberény: A Jász Múzeumért Alapítvány, 2006), 60–77 (henceforth: Langó, *Kun László törvényei*). If we accept Langó's theory that the second law is, in fact, authentic, it must be concluded that ethnic markers of the Cuman population were strictly controlled by the state. However, Nóra Berend defended her viewpoint and insisted that the second text is an early modern forgery, and the "first" Cuman law (which says nothing about ethnic markers) is the only authentic text (Nóra Berend, "Forging the Cuman law, forging an identity", in *Manufacturing a Past for the Present. Forgery and Authenticity in Medievalist Texts and Objects in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, eds. János M. Bak, Patrick J. Geary and Gábor Klaniczay (Brill: Leiden, 2015), 109–128 (henceforth: Berend, *Forging the Cuman Law*).

⁹¹ Acquiring a labor force by taking slaves during military campaigns was a widespread custom in the Cuman-Kipchak Federation and was also reported on by Russian chronicles. (Spinei, *The Great Migrations*, 228–230.)

⁹² Nóra Berend, *At the Gate of Christendom. Jews, Muslims and "Pagans" in Medieval Hungary, c. 1000–c. 1300* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 118 (henceforth: Berend, *At the Gates of Christendom*)

⁹³ Spinei, *The Great Migrations*, 227.

⁹⁴ He had been crowned only four years earlier and had serious conflicts with the Hungarian nobility when he tried to consolidate royal power. The accumulation of large feudal domains in the hands of the aristocracy as well as the appearance of a production-centered money economy required a change in the official structures of power. After Endre II's first reform, attempts rather weakened than strengthened the king's position. Béla IV aimed for a new consolidation of royal power and a return to the pre-1200 status quo. The catastrophic defeat of the Hungarian military was partly due to Béla IV's failure to recognize the military potential of the new, rising Hungarian elite. (Jenő Szűcs, *Az utolsó Árpádok* [The last kings of the Árpád Dynasty] (Budapest: MTA Történettudományi Intézete, 1993), 7–11 (henceforth: Szűcs, *Az utolsó Árpádok*) It is telling that according to the French chronicler Vincent de Beauvais, the Mongols had a long discussion whether they should attack Hungary and decided to do so when they learned about these internal conflicts. (Felicitas Schmieder, "Der Einfall der Mongolen nach Polen und Schlesien – Schreckensmeldungen, Hilferufe und die Reaktionen des Westens," in *Wahlstatt 1241. Beiträge zur Mongolenschlacht bei Liegnitz und zu ihren Nachwirkungen*, ed. Ulrich Schmilewski (Würzburg: Bergstadtverlag Korn, 1991) 77–86: 86.

⁹⁵ Berend, *At the Gates of Christendom*, 87.

⁹⁶ Master Roger, ed. Bak et al., 148–149.

⁹⁷ He also reports that he was provided with two Cumans who were considered Tatars. (Plano Carpini, ed. Dawson, 58, 69.)

⁹⁸ "Habent autem ex diversi nationibus, quas bellis edomuerunt, multitudinem maximam pugnatorum et precipue Cumanorum, quos ad pugnandum subigunt violentè. Si quem vero ex his paululum trepidare conspiciunt nec in mortem sese tota mentis insaniam precipitare ansque ulla cunctatione eius amputant caput." (Damir Karbić, Mirjana Matijević Sokol and James Ross Sweeney eds, *Archdeacon Thomas of Split - History of the bishops of Salona and Split* (Budapest: CEU Press, 2006), 285.)

were actually Mongol spies in disguise. Khan Kuthen and his family were suddenly placed under guard in Buda, and massacred along with their retinue. After this assault, most Cumans left for Bulgaria, where there was a larger Cuman minority. This also meant that the king lost an important military ally on the eve of the Mongol attack.

Little is known about this clash. Master Roger makes only minor comments and explains the animosity towards Cumans by a general hatred. The Hungarian aristocracy had an obvious reason to dislike the Cuman nobles; the peasants, however, who had contact only with the Cuman commoners, had no such agenda. Master Roger mentions the damage the Cumans' herds caused to the crops, and their custom of forcing Christian slaves to labor in their fields. As discussed earlier, such behavior was common among nomads in the steppe, but the situation must have been more complex here, when a group of ill-organized tribal fragments arrived. There had been other populations of steppe origin who migrated to the Hungarian Kingdom, served as military allies and were later assimilated, and so a model of integrating steppe peoples was certainly known.⁹⁹ The lowest stratum of the newcomers was certainly poor, and many of them quickly became servants in Hungarian households.¹⁰⁰ The Cuman community was very diverse, although they might have been perceived as a homogenous unity.¹⁰¹ Nevertheless, a general image of "the Cuman" seems to have existed, mainly based on previous conflicts with the Hungarian state. The legend of the holy king St Ladislaus tells the story how he saved a Hungarian maiden who had been abducted by a Cuman warrior. This story was a popular theme in manuscript illuminations and church frescos and also made its way into chronicles, including the *Chronicon Pictum*¹⁰² (even though this story was not included in the official vita of the holy king). Earlier clashes with the Cumans (and in general, steppe nomads) must have contributed to this negative attitude. However, the image of the pagans who killed and took Christians as captives, burnt churches to

the ground and committed all kinds of cruelties against the peaceful peasants seems, in fact, highly stereotypic.¹⁰³

In 1245 the king invited the Cumans back.¹⁰⁴ They had been camping somewhere on the lower Danubian Plain in Bulgaria since their departure from Hungary.¹⁰⁵ The population loss caused by the Mongol Invasion and the famine that followed made it crucial for King Béla to invite new settlers to the country.¹⁰⁶ Worried about a potential new Mongol attack, he initiated a military reform and a campaign of castle building.¹⁰⁷ He hoped for a renewed military alliance with the Cumans, and it was a reasonable decision to invite them back. Little is known, however, about this second migration wave. Those who came back to Hungary to settle here for good were probably not the same as those who had left Hungary a few years earlier: other Cumans who had been living in Bulgaria may have joined them too, while others may have chosen not to return.

The military role previously played by Pechenegs was now taken over by the Cuman forces¹⁰⁸ that served as mercenaries in the king's army and supported Béla's campaigns in Austria, Styria and Moravia.¹⁰⁹ Consequently, their nobility had a strong influence in the royal court. Aristocratic family ties were also formed: Béla IV wedded his son, who later became King Stephan V, to the daughter of the new Cuman khan in 1254,¹¹⁰ and so the minority's

¹⁰³ Schmieder, *Menschenfresser*, 159-179.

¹⁰⁴ György Fejér, *Codex diplomaticus Hungariae ecclesiasticus ac civilis*. Vol IV/3 (Budapest, 1829), 486. (henceforth: Fejér, *Codex diplomaticus*)

¹⁰⁵ The confusion that followed the death of Tsar Coloman Asen I of Bulgaria in 1246 may have put some pressure on them to migrate back to Hungary at Béla's invitation. Pálóczi Horváth, *Pechenegs, Cumans, Iasians*, 52.

¹⁰⁶ Although the settlement concentration and village desertion process had begun earlier and was only accelerated by the Mongol Invasion, the destruction was severe in the Great Plain where the Cumans found a new home. The impact of the invasion varied from one region to the other. In the middle region of the Plain, around present-day Kiskunfélegyháza, 75-90% of the villages were destroyed and abandoned. (Szabolcs Rosta, "Új eredmények a kunok Duna-Tisza közti szállásterületének kutatásában" [New results in the research of Cuman settlement in the Danube-Tisza Interfluvium] in "Kun-kép". *A magyarországi kunok hagyatéka. Tanulmányok Horváth Ferenc 60. születésnapja tiszteletére* [Cuman Image. Heritage of the Cumans in Hungary. Studies in honor of Ferenc Horváth's 60th birthday], ed. Szabolcs Rosta [Kiskunfélegyháza: Bács-Kiskun Megyei Önkormányzat Múzeumi Szervezete, Kiskun Múzeuma, 2009], 175-216: 191 (henceforth: Rosta, *Új eredmények*)

¹⁰⁷ These efforts, in fact, began earlier, but castle building projects gained new momentum in the light of the Mongol threat. (Erik Fügedi, *Vár és társadalom a 13-14. századi Magyarországon* [Castle and society in 13th-14th-century Hungary] *Értekezések a történelmi tudományok köréből* 82 (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1977), 18-32.

¹⁰⁸ Pálóczi Horváth, *Hagyományok, kapcsolatok és hatások*, 10.

¹⁰⁹ Pálóczi Horváth, *Pechenegs, Cumans, Iasians*, 68-77; András Pálóczi Horváth, "Pogányokkal védelmetztetjük országunkat: Kunok a Magyar Királyságban" ['We have our country defended by pagans': Cumans in the medieval Hungarian Kingdom], in *Keleti népek a középkori Magyarországon. Besenyők, úzok, kunok és jászok művelődéstörténelmi emlékei* [Peoples of Eastern origin in medieval Hungary. The cultural heritage of Pechenegs, Uzes, Cumans and the Jász], Studia ad Archaeologiam Pazmaniensiae – Archaeological Studies of the Péter Pázmány Catholic University, Department of Archaeology 2 (Budapest: Archaeolingua, 2014), 101-132.

¹¹⁰ It is not clear if she was the daughter of the late Khan Kuthen or another Cuman leader, Zeyhan. The latter is more probable as he is named as a relative of the king in a charter issued one year later. (Szűcs, *Az utolsó Árpádok*, 18; Gyárfás, *A jász-kunok*, vol. 2, 307.)

⁹⁹ Pechenegs arrived in waves between the tenth and twelfth centuries. Peoples from the Khwarezm as well as Szeklers also served in the royal army. However, these minorities did not enjoy privileges similar to those given to the Cumans and had no independence in their internal matters. (András Pálóczi Horváth, "Pogányokkal védelmetztetjük országunkat: keleti népek a középkori Magyar Királyságban, a kálizoktól a kunokig" ["We protect our country by the help of pagans": peoples of Eastern origin in the medieval Hungarian Kingdom, from Khwarezmians to the Cumans] *Studia Caroliniensia* 2004/2, 10-30: 13-14.) (henceforth: Pálóczi Horváth, *Pogányokkal védelmetztetjük*)

¹⁰⁰ György Györffy, "A kunok feudalizálódása" [The feudalization of Cumans] in *Tanulmányok a parasztság történetéhez Magyarországon a 14. században* [Studies on the history of peasantry in the 14th century in Hungary], ed. György Székely (Budapest, Akadémiai Kiadó, 1953) 248-275: 251. (henceforth: Györffy, *A kunok feudalizálódása*)

¹⁰¹ William of Rubruck reports on a Christian Cuman he met on his way to the court of Mangu Chan in the mid-thirteenth century. The Cuman was said to have been baptized in Hungary by friars. (Rubruck ed. Jackson and Morgan, 135-136.) Plano Carpini also mentions Christian Cumans whom he met on his journey. (Plano Carpini ed. Dawson, 70.)

¹⁰² Gyula László, *A Szent László-legendá középkori falképei* [Medieval murals depicting the St Ladislaus legend] (Budapest: Tájak-Korok-Múzeumok Egyesület, 1993), 17-20. (henceforth: László, *A Szent László-legendá*)

place was also secured within the court by dynastic means.¹¹¹ Given the power plays between Stephen and Béla IV, the Cumans continued to play a key role in the struggles for royal power.¹¹² In the face of demands by his son, Béla IV divided the country in 1262. The area east of the Danube, including the areas inhabited by Cumans, came under Stephen's authority.¹¹³ However, the Cumans rather fought on the king's side, probably because their original loyalty oath bound them primarily to Béla.

The conflict between father and son escalated into a war in 1264, which then ended by a return to the *status quo*. When Stephen ascended to the throne in 1270 after the death of his father, the Cumans again came under direct royal protection, the *dominus Cumanorum* being the same person as the king; at the same time, the palatine started to use the title *judex Cumanorum*.¹¹⁴ Cuman influence reached its peak a few years later during the reign of Ladislaus IV (also called Ladislaus the Cuman), the son of Stephen V and the Cuman noblewoman Elizabeth. The archbishop of Olomouc warned the pope in 1272 about the Cumans' growing influence in the country and described the danger they posed to Christianity in the region, as – he wrote – not only are they fierce but they also force their captives to abandon Jesus Christ and follow their shamanistic faith.¹¹⁵ It is uncertain to what extent these were exaggerations; however, just like Béla IV, Ladislaus also hoped to put an end to the feudal anarchy and relied on Cuman military strength against the barons. He also spent most of his time in Cuman company, repudiated his wife Isabella for the sake of a Cuman mistress, and even began to adopt their clothing style and pagan customs.¹¹⁶

The king tried to settle the dispute over the Cumans' legal standing and also to ease the tension between his court and the Church by issuing the Cuman Laws, thus, arranging Cuman affairs constitutionally. This text was supposed to regulate the rights and duties of the Cuman minority. The original text has been lost; a 1339 copy is stored in the Archives of the Vatican. The historiographical tradition knows about two texts, the First and the Second Cuman Law, the first of which was interpreted as a draft, while the second, now considered a possible forgery, included a longer and more precise description of the landed

properties donated to the Cuman minority by the king.¹¹⁷ The main points of the law compelled the Cumans to be baptized and follow the prescriptions and regulations of the Church as well as to abandon their old shamanistic faith; to leave their tents, settle in villages, and adapt the customs of the sedentary population; to avoid killing or harassing Christians; and to leave all landed properties, monasteries or churches that they had illegally occupied.¹¹⁸ The Hungarian aristocracy as well as the Church wanted to isolate the Cumans from the king and give effect to the Cuman Laws – which, on the one hand, granted them a good measure of internal independence, but on the other hand, compelled them to assimilate into the feudal state. Cumans organized a revolt, and King Ladislaus IV had to march against them with military force. The disturbance did not last long, but after they were defeated, ca. one third of the Cuman population left Hungary never to return.¹¹⁹ Most of those Cumans inhabiting the southern areas of the Great Plain, left the country forever.¹²⁰ It is uncertain if some Cumans returned here to settle after their devastating defeat and if so, in what numbers. Those who participated in the revolt and were caught by the royal army were reduced to serfs, and only those who did not support the military campaign were allowed to keep their privileges.¹²¹ The latter suggests that at least some Cumans must have decided to stay in the area even if the majority left the country. Simon of Kéza, the chronicler of Ladislaus IV, reports in his *Gesta Hungarorum* that many of the Cumans were taken as captives, others left their possessions and families behind and fled, and those who stayed subjugated themselves to the king.¹²² The tensions between the crown and the Cumans were not yet over. However, only a couple

¹¹¹ The king created similar dynastic ties to the Ruthenian and Polish aristocracy through his daughters in order to secure future allies. (Szűcs, *Az utolsó Árpádok*, 79-80.)

¹¹² Berend, *At the Gates of Christendom*, 88.

¹¹³ This bond was reinforced also by more direct means: Béla spent more money on expensive gifts to the Cuman nobility than on any other group of noblemen in 1264, when the struggle reached its peak. (Pálóczi Horváth, *Pechenegs, Cumans, Iasians*, 68-69.)

¹¹⁴ Berend, *At the Gates of Christendom*, 88.

¹¹⁵ Gyárfás, *A jász-kunok*, vol. 2, 426.

¹¹⁶ In 1288, Ladislaus was captured by Hungarian barons and forced to swear an oath before the archbishop of Esztergom that he would return to the proper Christian life. His oath included that he should change back to proper Christian attire and hairstyle as a symbolic expression of his sincere change of ways. (Szűcs, *Az utolsó Árpádok*, 317; Pálóczi Horváth, *Pechenegs, Cumans, Iasians*, 81.)

¹¹⁷ Berend, *At the Gates of Christendom*, 89-92; Berend, *Az 1279-I kun törvények*, 147-151. Miklós Kring also found this text suspicious. (Kring, Miklós. "Kun és jász társadalmeelemek a középkorban. I." [Cuman and Iasian elements in the society in the Middle Ages. I.] *Századok* 66 (1932), 35-63: 39-40.) More recently, Péter Langó revisited the text and argued that it is authentic, and so the geographical regions discussed in the charter as donated to the Cumans should be accepted (Langó, *Kun László törvényei*, 66). As already mentioned, this debate has not yet been settled.

¹¹⁸ Gyárfás, *A jász-kunok*, vol. 2, 333-335

¹¹⁹ György Györffy, "Magyarország népessége a honfoglalástól a XIV. század közepéig" [Demography of Hungary from the conquest to the end of the 14th century], in *Magyarország történeti demográfiája* [The historical demography of Hungary] ed. József Kovácsics (Budapest: Közgazdasági és Jogi Könyvkiadó, 1963), 45-62: 56. Pálóczi Horváth accepts Györffy's calculation. (András Pálóczi Horváth, "Steppe traditions and cultural assimilation of a nomadic people: The Cumans in Hungary in the 13th–14th century," in *Archaeological Approaches to Cultural Identity*, ed. Stephen Shennan, *One World Archaeology* 10 (London: Routledge, 2003), 291-302: 292 (henceforth: Pálóczi Horváth, *Steppe Traditions*)

¹²⁰ Pálóczi Horváth, *Pechenegs, Cumans, Iasians*, 80.

¹²¹ Gyárfás, *A jász-kunok*, vol. 2, 354; Pálóczi Horváth, *Pechenegs, Cumans, Iasians*, 61.

¹²² Károly Szabó ed. and transl. *Kézai Simon mester Magyar Krónikája* [The Hungarian Chronicle of Master Simon of Kéza] (Pest, 1863), 83 (henceforth: Simon of Kéza ed. Szabó)

of years later, Ladislaus IV was murdered, probably by his own Cuman retinue.¹²³

It seems that it had been the high tensions in the upper stratum of Cuman and Hungarian society that resulted in violent actions, while little is revealed about the everyday interactions of commoners. As a result of a long integration process, Cumans adopted most Hungarian customs within a few generations' time, however, the various aspects of their identity: the language, the attire, the beliefs, or the inner hierarchy of their community did not change at the same pace. As there are no documents written or even dictated by the Cumans which would testify to their views and interests, all information on their internal matters come second-hand.

Cuman commoners probably integrated into the host society relatively quickly. Elements of their ethnicity such as the Oriental dress and hairstyle, however, survived well into the fourteenth century as attested by pictorial representations as well as archaeological finds, although Cumans entered the Hungarian commodity market and adopted elements of the western attire.¹²⁴ On the other hand, Cuman attire and armament was fashionable in the thirteenth century, probably as a result of the Cuman elite's high status. The steppe-type saddle, the reflex bow, the leather armor, the caftan, the belt and the high felt cap appear again and again on wall paintings and miniatures from this period; elements of this traditional attire were found in high-status Cuman graves as well as in cemeteries of commoners.¹²⁵ The process of Christianization sped up when Franciscan missionary activity intensified in the fourteenth century under the rule of Louis the Great, who himself had strong ties to the Franciscan Order. Conversion targeted commoners, and its main goal was to ensure a proper payment of taxes. The friars realized quite early

that for most Cumans, the greatest obstacle in accepting the Christian faith and the control of the Church was tithing. In order to overcome this obstacle, King Charles Robert asked the pope to allow the Cumans to be exempt from this duty.¹²⁶

According to the more traditional scholarly narrative, the first generation of Cumans maintained a nomadic lifestyle on the Great Hungarian Plain.¹²⁷ Master Roger notes that they "wandered aimlessly"¹²⁸ (although this must have been due to the confusing situation after their primary migration and not a proper form of mobile pastoralism). This point of view, however, was already questioned in the 1980s by László Selmeczi.¹²⁹ The image of a nomadic people constantly on the move seemed to be supported by the analysis of place names associated with early Cuman presence, because charters often name Cuman communities using the construction *in circuitu villarum*, *circa ecclesiam*, or *iuxta locum*, suggesting that Cumans lived in temporary camps. The term *descendus* (dwelling, camp) is also often used, usually with Turkic personal names of possible Cuman leaders (in the form "the camp of a certain person"). Nevertheless, these ambiguous place names might well reflect the uncertainties caused by Cuman naming practices, according to which a settlement's name changed in every generation to correspond to the name of the community's leader.¹³⁰ Thus, the settlements were only given a permanent name when the leaders of these communities abandoned the traditional naming practice. The fact that many settlement names appear only in the fifteenth century also reflects the patchy nature of our charter evidence rather than an early system of nomadic movements on the Plain. Gábor Hatházi calculated that the area at one Cuman family's disposal could not have been larger than 40-50 km², which was definitely not enough to support any form of real nomadism.¹³¹ Thus, nomadic movements must have been impossible due to physical barriers. Communities might have moved within smaller

¹²³ The way the assassination was organized and the motivation behind it is uncertain, as there is no reliable contemporary record. In Gyárfás' view it is not likely that the Cumans in the court, to whom the king gave privileges, would have plotted against him (Gyárfás, *A jász-kunok*, vol. 2, 377-382), although traditional narratives report that three Cuman noblemen, Arboc, Törtel and Kemence were the assassins. This version was included in the *Chronica Hungarorum* as well as in the Illuminated Chronicle. In the *Styrian Rhymed Chronicle* of Ottokar, Ladislaus is killed by a Cuman, whose wife the king had an affair with. Perhaps the king's Hungarian adversaries had a hand in the assassination as well. (Szűcs, *Az utolsó Árpádok*, 321; Gyula Kristó, *Kun László emlékezete* [The memory of Ladislaus the Cuman] Szegedi Középkori Könyvtár 5 (Szeged: Szegedi Középkorász Műhely, 1994), 245-247; Pálóczi Horváth, *Pechenegs, Cumans, Iasians*, 82.)

¹²⁴ András Pálóczi Horváth, "Régészeti adatok a kunok viseletéhez" [Archaeological data concerning the Cuman dress style] *Archaeologiai Értesítő* 109 (1982), 89-107: 99-101 (henceforth: Pálóczi Horváth, *Régészeti adatok a kunok viseletéhez*); Gábor Hatházi, *A kunok régészeti emlékei a Kelet-Dunántúlon* [The archaeological heritage of Cumans in Eastern Transdanubia] *Opuscula Hungarica* 5 (Budapest: Magyar Nemzeti Múzeum, 2004), 112-120; 131-132 (henceforth: Hatházi, *A kunok régészeti emlékei*)

¹²⁵ Pálóczi Horváth, *Steppe Traditions*, 294; András Pálóczi Horváth, "Le costume coman au moyen âge" *Acta Archaeologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 32 (1980), 403-27: 408-409, see also footnote 38; Pálóczi Horváth, *Régészeti adatok a kunok viseletéhez*, 89-107; Jenő Zichy, "A Képes Krónika miniatűrjei viselettörténeti szempontból" [Miniatures of the Illuminated Chronicle from the point of view of dress history] in *Petrovics Elek emlékkönyv. Hommage à Alexius Petrovics* (Budapest: Országos Magyar Művészeti Múzeum, 1934), 59-70.

¹²⁶ Gyárfás, *A jász-kunok*, vol. 3, 49.

¹²⁷ József Szabadfalvi, "Nomád típusú teletelési rendszer az Alföldön." [Nomadic style wintering in the Great Hungarian Plain.] In *Tanulmányok a magyar pásztorkodás köréből* [Studies on Hungarian pastoralism] *Studia Folkloristica et Ethnographica* 10 (Debrecen: Kossuth Lajos Tudományegyetem Néprajzi Tanszéke, 1984), 60 (henceforth: Szabadfalvi, *Nomád típusú teletelési rendszer*); Miklós Kring, "Kun és jász társadalmi elemek a középkorban. I." [Cuman and Iasian elements in the society in the Middle Ages. I.] *Századok* 66 (1932), 34-63: 42; László Marjai Szabó, "A kunok betelepítése és az állandó szállások kialakulása a Nagykunság területén." [The migration of the Cumans and the appearance of fixed settlements in Greater Cumania], *Az Alföldi Tudományos Intézet Évkönyve 1944-45/1* (1946), 97-106: 97-98; Györfi, *A kunok feudalizálódása*, 250-253, 260; Spinei, *The Great Migrations*, 221

¹²⁸ Master Roger, ed. Bak et al., 3.

¹²⁹ László Selmeczi, "A kunok nomadizmusának kérdése" [The question of Cuman nomadism], *A Herman Ottó Múzeum Évkönyve* 25-26 (1988), 177-188 (henceforth: Selmeczi, *A kunok nomadizmusa*)

¹³⁰ Berend, *At the Gates of Christendom*, 138. This is also supported by archaeological observations at the early Cuman settlements. (Rosta, *Új eredmények*, 199)

¹³¹ Gábor Hatházi, "Megjegyzések a kun településhálózat megszilárdulásának kérdéséhez" [Remarks concerning the establishment of a fixed Cuman settlement pattern], in *Internationales Kulturhistorisches Symposium Mogersdorf 1994, Band 25*. (Eisenstadt: Amt des Bürgerlandischen Landesregierung, 1996), 27-40: 28 (henceforth: Hatházi, *Megjegyzések*)

areas but this movement had obviously nothing to do with nomadic practices where large distances are covered and different ecological niches exploited.

There is an example also often cited as an evidence for Cuman mobility in the later period. A report mentions Cumans living in tents as late as in the mid-fourteenth century: in 1347, Kuncheg, the chieftain of the Cuman Chertan clan issued a charter in which he allowed a Hungarian aristocrat, Töttös, to have ownership of twelve Cumans (or Cuman families),¹³² described as Cumans living in “felt houses” (*filtreas domus habentes*),¹³³ who had originally fallen under his authority but who had escaped from his territory to the land of Töttös. In this case, however, living in tents was definitely not equivalent to being mobile, because these people had been prohibited from moving around freely. (Hatházi even argues that their repeated escape from the authority of a Cuman lord to a Hungarian lord’s land suggests that their fate would have been more tolerable in the hands of the latter.¹³⁴) More recently, research by Szabolcs Rosta also questioned the early mobility of the Cumans on the Great Plain. He systematically re-investigated ca. 100 late medieval places in the area of Lesser Cumania (some of which were excavated or at least a field walk was carried out around them, and some of which are known only from the textual sources). After analyzing the network of early Cuman presence, he came to the conclusion that fixed settlements appeared earlier than it had been previously thought; if there was any form of mobility practiced, it must have been the privilege of a small elite. Landed properties associated with early Cuman presence are surprisingly clustered and seem relatively closed.¹³⁵ This, however, may not be true for all areas the Cumans inhabited. (The question of possible Cuman nomadism as a methodological problem will be discussed more extensively in Chapter 2.)

Although they might have been perceived by contemporary Hungarians as one distinct and homogenous group, Cumans entering the kingdom consisted of tribal fragments mainly brought together only by the necessity to flee from the Mongols, and this heterogeneity is evidenced also by DNA samples extracted from Cuman burials. These showed that most of the population had diverse western Eurasian roots, although eastern Asian and Siberian origins could

also be traced.¹³⁶ This also implies that these varied groups were most likely not living at the same economic level. Some of them may have been more specialized in animal husbandry, while others were more involved in trade with agriculturalists; some of them may have been rather self-sufficient, while others relied more on trade ties. It is also possible that after their arrival to Hungary the relative mobility of households depended on social status, with commoners being, more or less, settled and involved in both small-scale animal husbandry and agriculture, or mainly in land cultivation as peasants, while nobles maintained a more mobile lifestyle between settlements.

The early fifteenth century brought important changes in the Cuman minority’s life. They were no longer needed in the army: although they served as mercenaries in the royal army in the fourteenth century, King Sigismund realized the need for a military reform as he faced the growing threat of the Turkish forces. Cumans were more and more thought of as taxpayers rather than military allies. It was only the Cuman captains, members of the Cuman elite, who still had to serve in the army, but there were cases when they asked for permission to pay instead. Such instances are known from the mid-fifteenth century onwards.¹³⁷ This *proventus pharetralis*, the money paid instead of military service, represented a decreasing sum, probably due to the modest economic and financial potential of the Cuman “nobility”.¹³⁸ It was proposed by Gábor Hatházi that the charter issued in 1407 on the collective privileges of the Iasian minority (another ethnic group that arrived together with the Cumans) was also valid for the Cumans. This charter reinforced the understanding that they still had the right to have their own captains as judges, and were freed from paying tolls.¹³⁹

A pivotal step in the Cuman integration process was the creation of the so-called *sedes* system (in Hungarian: *székek*); in fact, this was the last step in their loss of importance as military allies and their formal integration into the feudal hierarchy. The *sedes*, or Cuman seats, were administrative units of the state, organized in the areas inhabited by the Cuman population. Thus, the seats of Halas (around present-day Kiskunhalas), Kecskemét, and Mizse or Kara (around present-day Lajosmizse) in Lesser Cumania, Kolbáz in present-day Greater Cumania, and Hontos in Transdanubia, the so-called Mezőföld area, were created. (The history of these seats is discussed in detail in Chapter 3.) This re-organization probably took place between 1411 and 1417, during the reign of Sigismund.

¹³² It has been questioned if the charter refers to twelve men or twelve families. In the *Codex Cumanicus*, the term “yurt” is used not only as ‘tent’ but also to refer to a household. (Györfy, *A kipesaki kun társadalom*, 258; Hatházi, *Halas kun székközpont*, 228.)

¹³³ Gyárfás, *A jász-kunok*, vol. 3, 72-73.

¹³⁴ The descendants of Cumans who lost their families and properties, and were forced to join the Chertan clan in the migration wave a hundred years earlier, must have been in a subjugated position. This must have been even more so after the Christian slaves, used in agricultural production and around the households, had to be set free, and available manpower was seriously decimated. Hatházi, *Halas kun székközpont*, 216-217.

¹³⁵ Rosta, *Új eredmények*, 175-216.

¹³⁶ Erika Bogácsi-Szabó, Tibor Kalmár, Bernadett Csányi, Gyöngyvér Tömöry, Ágnes Czibula, Katalin Priskin, Ferenc Horváth, Christopher Stephen Downes, and István Raskó, “Mitochondrial DNA of Ancient Cumanians: Culturally Asian Steppe Nomadic Immigrants with Substantially More Western Eurasian Mitochondrial DNA Lineages”, *Human Biology* 77/ 5 (October 2005), 639-662 (henceforth: Bogácsi-Szabó et al., *Mitochondrial DNA*)

¹³⁷ Hatházi, *Halas kun székközpont* 223; Hatházi, *A kunok régészeti emlékei*, 179; Gyárfás, *A jász-kunok*, vol 3, 596.

¹³⁸ Hatházi, *A kunok régészeti emlékei*, 183-184.

¹³⁹ Hatházi, *A kunok régészeti emlékei*, 184; Gyárfás, *A jász-kunok*, vol. 3, 549-551.

This process was accompanied by a wave of inspections, insuring that *de facto* Cuman land ownership was legal. This meant that some lands the Cumans arbitrarily occupied were now taken away.¹⁴⁰ In some cases, especially in the seat of Halas, Cuman communities had to move and re-settle in a now legally certified construction.¹⁴¹ This meant that instead of an ethnically organized legislation, a territorial-based organization was set up in the Cuman areas. They were still exempt from tax-paying (except for the money they paid in place of military service), and had the right of jurisdiction in their seat, supported by a jury of twelve members (who were also exempt from paying taxes). Thus, some privileges and internal autonomy were still preserved, but now it was organized within administrative units under state control.¹⁴²

At the same time, as Hatházi recognized, Cumans were increasingly mentioned in charters as *rurales*, that is, peasants involved in land cultivation.¹⁴³ This again signifies an acceleration of the integration process. Interestingly, it seems that conflicts concerning land use were present not only at the beginning of Cuman integration, but also later when there was a growing need for pasture land. There was, for example, a serious armed conflict between the Cumans of Kolbázzsék and the Hungarian village of Kenderes in 1522. According to a document, the Cumans attacked and robbed the peasants of Kenderes, driving away their livestock, which was later used and sold on the market of Kolbázzsállás.¹⁴⁴ Although this conflict may resemble those reported by Master Roger (the Cumans are described as violent barbarians who cruelly beat up and wound the peasants and steal everything they can, and later did not even bother to deny these acts), this is a later conflict that was ignited by the changing borders of landed properties, and which may reflect the need for land for cultivation or pasture. It definitely had nothing to do with the initial conflicts caused by a possibly mobile Cuman population.

During the Ottoman Turkish wars, Cuman and Hungarian history took the same trajectory; the Great Hungarian Plain was heavily decimated by the war in the sixteenth century, and double taxation was a factor in this depressed situation. The following wave of population movement and settlement concentration transformed the Cuman areas, serving as an obvious milestone marking the end of medieval Cuman history (and also as the date of desertion of most settlements whose faunal assemblages I discuss in the book). However, there was another important event in the Cuman minority's life in the early modern era, and this was the so-called *redemptio*. This also has to be addressed in a few words, because this period was essential in the

identity formation of the modern Cuman minority, and is reflected in the way their history is perceived.

Most areas of the Great Hungarian Plain were repopulated only decades after the devastating Ottoman Turkish wars. It was not until the 1720s that the economy started to grow again in the Cuman areas, with cattle raising as a leading activity in Greater Cumania, and sheep keeping as the main economic factor in Lesser Cumania.¹⁴⁵ These areas, now known as the District of Greater and Lesser Cumania, as well as the Iasian District, were sold to the Teutonic Order along with the rights of jurisdiction, taxation, and toll collecting, from 1702 on. This meant that all privileges the Cumans and Iasians had had were obliterated and they sank into serfdom. The Teutonic Order tried to make as much income from these lands as possible and demanded high rental fees for the pastures the inhabitants used, their main occupation being animal husbandry. It comes as no surprise that the Cuman areas supported Rákóczi in the short War of Independence in the early eighteenth century. However, the lands remained in the hands of the Order after the peace treaty was signed at Sztatmár in 1711, and taxes remained high. Although in 1715 the Hungarian Parliament admitted that selling these districts to the Teutonic Order was, in fact, illegal, the Order was only willing to resign from its privileges upon the return of the sum they had originally paid for these lands. This, however, never happened, and the Order sold its rights over the Cuman districts to a church infirmary (*Pesti Invalidus Rendház*). The new owner enforced the same taxation, which met with a huge wave of resistance. The so-called *redemptio* movement targeted buying back these lands. After a fundraising campaign in which a huge amount of money (more than 500,000 forints!) was publicly collected for this purpose, Maria Theresa issued a charter that became the foundation of the new Cuman privileges. The queen reinforced some of the old privileges, and gave the community ownership over the lands they used (although they were not allowed to sell these). The Cuman districts were now exempt from toll paying and were not subjugated to any landlords. Internal autonomy was again introduced: only the palatine had jurisdiction over them, otherwise they could freely manage their own internal legal conflicts. They also had the right to let any free man settle on their property. New settlers could be taxed but also enjoyed the same privileges as other inhabitants of the Cuman districts, which made these lands attractive to many. The *redempti*, those who collected money to buy the lands back, received land ownership in the ratio of the sum they put into the fundraising. This resulted in a transformation of landed properties. While the *redempti* held ownership in communally used lands (e.g. pastures), the *irredempti*, those who did or could not contribute, only owned their own pieces of land.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁰ Hatházi, A kunok régészeti emlékei, 184.

¹⁴¹ Hatházi, Halas kun székközpont, 246-249.

¹⁴² Hatházi, A kunok régészeti emlékei, 185.

¹⁴³ Hatházi, A kunok régészeti emlékei a Kelet-Dunántúlon, 184.

¹⁴⁴ László Kormos, *Kenderes története, Oklevéltár 1728-ig* [The history of Kenderes. A collection of charters until 1728] A Szolnok Megyei Múzeumok Közleményei 41 (Szolnok: Damjanich Múzeum, 1979), 26-29 (henceforth: Kormos, Kenderes története)

¹⁴⁵ Erzsébet Bánkiné Molnár, *A kunok Magyarországon* [The Cumans in Hungary] (Kiskunfélegyháza: Kiskun Önkormányzatok Szövetsége, 2008), 57 (henceforth: Bánkiné Molnár, *A kunok Magyarországon*)

¹⁴⁶ Bánkiné Molnár, *A kunok Magyarországon*, 52-64.

1.4 Cuman integration in the Hungarian scholarship. A short overview

Over the past decades, Cuman history in Hungary has been in the focus of research among historians and archaeologists, including distinguished scholars such as András Pálóczi Horváth, Ferenc Horváth, István Fodor, Gábor Hatházi, László Selmeczi or György Györffy, and more recently, Szabolcs Rosta, Edit Sárosi and Zsolt Gallina, who produced thorough and comprehensive studies. The way Cumans became sedentary and integrated into a feudal state-level society became a somewhat fashionable topic, especially in the second half of the twentieth century. As a result, a more or less detailed picture emerged about the process of their assimilation in the medieval and early modern period. Here I merely list the most important works and aim to orient the reader rather than provide an in-depth discussion of the findings. Most of these works are available in Hungarian only and have thus been largely overlooked in international scholarship.

The first comprehensive work on Cuman and Iasian history in Hungary, the four-volume monograph *A jáász-kunok története* [The history of Iasians and Cumans] by István Gyárfás, was published between 1870 and 1885. This study is of special importance because of the abundance of written documents published and analyzed within its framework. Gyárfás attached the relevant charters and letters to his study, but, given the date of publication, his analysis lacks proper modern methodology. György Györffy focused his attention first on Cuman integration in a short study in 1953, where he interpreted the process as “feudalization”. A number of his articles on Cuman history and linguistics were collected and published in his book *A magyarság keleti elemei* [Eastern elements among the Hungarian people] in 1990.

Given the large number of relevant excavations, there is a vast literature concerning the archaeological research on Cumans. Cuman archaeology came into focus at the end of the nineteenth century, even though the first scholarly publications date to the 1930s (excavations by István Györffy, Lajos Bartucz, Kálmán Szabó and István Éri). These early excavations are, unfortunately, of not much use for modern studies given the lack of proper excavation methods and poor sampling.

A new wave of interest in Cuman studies started in the 1970s. The lion’s share of modern research was conducted by this generation, especially László Selmeczi, András Pálóczi Horváth and Gábor Hatházi. Selmeczi focused on Greater Cumania (Nagykunság), Pálóczi-Horváth on Lesser Cumania (Kiskunság), while Hatházi discussed the Cuman presence in the area of Hontos, just west of the Danube River. Alongside the large number of articles and small studies on specific sites, they have published comprehensive summaries of their research.

Selmeczi’s 1992 volume *Régészeti és néprajzi tanulmányok a jáászokról és a kunokról* [Archaeological and ethnographic

studies on Iasians and Cumans] is a collection of articles and studies on various topics connected to Cuman and Iasian research including settlement, nomadism, Christianization and burial customs. Later, he focused his attention on Iasians, and recently published a monograph on Iasian history (*A jáászok eredete és középkori műveltsége* [The origin and medieval culture of the Iasians], 2005).

Pálóczi Horváth summarized his observations in three large monographs. His 1989 book, *Pechenegs, Cumans, Iasians* (available in English translation), and his 1993 volume, *Hagyományok, kapcsolatok és hatások a kunok régészeti kultúrájában* [Traditions, connections and influences in Cuman material culture] incorporated all available archaeological research conducted by the date of their publication. Together they are regarded among the most important pieces of work written on this subject. His most recent volume, *Keleti népek a középkori Magyarországon: besenyők, úzok, kunok és jáászok művelődéstörténeti emlékei* [Eastern peoples in medieval Hungary: the cultural heritage of Pechenegs, Uzes, Cumans and Iasians], published in 2014, summarizes the historical and archaeological research of the past two decades, and touches upon archaeological evidence, Cuman attire, the question of Cuman territories, Cuman military forces in the royal army, the development of fixed settlements, as well as the heritage these peoples brought from the steppe region. Pálóczi also published a series of articles about the 25-year excavation at the village of Szentkirály, the largest excavated Cuman settlement.

Gábor Hatházi provides an excellent summary on Cuman research in the first volume of the monograph on the city of Kiskunhalas (*Kiskunhalas története*, 2000), discussing results achieved since Pálóczi’s first two comprehensive monographs. In his 2004 book *A kunok régészeti emlékei a Kelet-Dunántúlon* [Archaeological remains of the Cumans in the eastern Transdanubia], he provides a thorough study of all available archaeological finds in the Hontos area.

In 2001, Ferenc Horváth published *A csengelei kunok ura és népe* [The chieftain and people of Cumans in Csengele]. This is a more popular, but in its scholarly quality, excellent monograph on his excavation at Csengele, where a Cuman nobleman was found buried along with his horse.

Nóra Berend has written extensively about the Cumans as a minority in medieval Hungary in her book *At the Gates of Christendom* (published in English in 2001), discussing written as well as archaeological evidence. The problems of the Cuman language and the traces it left in the Hungarian language have been thoroughly addressed in the candidate dissertation of István Mándoky Kongur (*A kun nyelv magyarországi emlékei* [Remains of the Cuman language in Hungary], 1993). Cuman ethnography and its Central Asian analogies have been studied extensively by Júlia Bartha, whose articles are of special interest due to her first-hand experience with contemporary nomadic peoples.

Carmen miserabile: A tatárjárás magyarországi emlékei [The remnants of the Mongol Invasion in Hungary], a volume edited by Szabolcs Rosta and György V. Székely, and dedicated to the archaeological and historical research of the devastating Mongol Invasion of the Hungarian Kingdom in 1241/42, was published in 2003. Many of the articles touch upon the role Cumans played in these years, including my analysis of a possibly Cuman horse grave.

István Vásáry's *Cumans and Tatars: Oriental Military in the Pre-Ottoman Balkans, 1185–1365* (published in English in 2005) provides a comprehensive discussion of Cuman presence in the Balkan Peninsula in the twelfth-thirteenth centuries, from the Second Bulgarian Empire to the Serbian lands, the Romanian principalities, and Byzantium. Szilvia Kovács' 2014 monograph *A kunok története a mongol hódításig* [Cuman history until the Mongol conquest] also tackles the early history of Cumans until their Hungarian assimilation. Both works focus on political and military history and use mainly written sources.

Recently, Edit Sárosi published *Deserting Villages - Emerging Market Towns: Settlement Dynamics and Land Management in the Great Hungarian Plain, 1300-1700* (2016), a monograph in English, based on her PhD dissertation. This volume is the first attempt to summarize the landscape history of the Danube-Tisza Interfluvium Region, with a focus on changing settlement patterns, and a special emphasis on the development of the market town of Kecskemét.

The above list of scholarly works cannot by any means be taken as exhaustive. Debates are inevitably present (some of which will be discussed in the following chapters), however, the most basic findings of Hungarian research may be summed up by citing Pálóczi's periodization of the Cuman integration process.¹⁴⁷ He described five different stages:

1. The first stage lasted from their arrival until ca. 1280. In this phase, Cumans tried to keep up a more mobile way of life within the boundaries offered by their new home country. Their autonomy was regulated by their contract with King Béla IV. This stage ended with the revolt of dissatisfied Cuman groups and the creation of the Cuman Laws.

2. The second stage lasted from 1280 until the end of the fourteenth century. The Cuman Laws reflect a mutual agreement with Hungarian authorities. Cumans tried to adapt to the requirements of a sedentary way of life through conversion and acceptance of Hungarian laws. They still served as mercenaries in the army, even though

the number of Cuman light cavalry had considerably decreased by the reign of Louis the Great.

3. The lion's share of the transformation of Cuman society started in the second half of the fourteenth century when they settled and their existence as an independent military force ended. According to Pálóczi, Cumans in this period were bilingual and had a "double" cultural background, identifying themselves as Cumans and Hungarians at the same time.

4. Cuman history from the beginning of the fifteenth until the middle of the sixteenth century has not yet been properly analyzed. This phase seems to be a time of slow, uneven and spontaneous integration.

5. After 1541, regions inhabited by Cumans fell under Ottoman Turkish rule. Since the new invaders did not differentiate between Cuman and Hungarian settlements, Cuman and Hungarian history took the same twists and turns.

This periodization may prove useful even though the process of economic, social and linguistic integration must have happened at a different pace, and of all aspects of integration, economy must have had a decisive role. Cuman economy had to undergo certain changes to adapt to the structures characteristic of state level society. The question how this development is reflected in their animal husbandry, has been a largely unexplored topic. In the following chapters, I investigate archaeological finds that testify to this transformation, along with textual evidence. Before discussing the actual sites and charters, however, some methodological issues must be raised.

¹⁴⁷ András Pálóczi-Horváth, "Kunok a kelet-európai sztyeppén és Magyarországon" [Cumans on the East European steppe and Hungary], in *Az Alföld társadalma*, ed. Novák László, *Az Arany János Múzeum Közleményei VIII* (Nagykőrös: Arany János Múzeum, 1998), 109-146; 115-116 (henceforth: Pálóczi Horváth: Kunok a kelet-európai sztyeppén és Magyarországon)