



Book Review – Kitap İncelemesi

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Alexander Paroń's *The Pechenegs: Nomads in the Political and Cultural Landscape*, translated into English by Thomas Anessi, was published by Brill 2021 as volume 74 of the history series called East Central and Eastern Europe in the Middle Ages, 450-1450, edited by Florin Curta and Duřan Zupka.

The work consists of 7 main chapters without including *Introduction* and *Conclusion*. The chapters are: 1. *Black Sea-Caspian Steppe: Natural Conditions*, 2. *Black Sea-Caspian Steppe: Outline of Ethnic and Political Relations to the End of the Ninth Century*, 3. *The Earliest History of the Pechenegs*, 4. *Structures and Forms of Existence*, 5. *The Apex of the Pechenegs' Political Importance*, 6. *Decline of the Pechenegs' Power on the Black Sea Steppe*, 7. *The Pechenegs on the Territories of the States Neighbouring the Steppe*.

The Introduction is divided into three subheadings: 1. *Written Sources*, 2. *Archaeological Sources*, and 3. *The State of Research. Proposed Research Procedure*.

The author begins the introduction by briefly explaining how nomadic societies are interpreted in the minds of European settled societies and the potential reasons for the clichés identified. However, contrary to the biased opinions against nomadic societies, the author points out that it would be a big mistake to limit the impact of nomads on European history only as violent barbarians and that the socio-cultural and political structure of European history cannot be fully understandable with this mindset (Paroń, 2021, p.1-2). After this brief introduction, the author begins to introduce the written sources concerning the Pechenegs. The sources introduced in the work can be briefly categorised as follows; Byzantine sources, Muslim sources, Latin sources, Hungarian sources, Armenian sources, Rus' sources, an Uighur report written in Tibetan and Khazar texts written in Hebrew. Another important issue pointed out by the author is how these written sources should be approached because these works were written from a single perspective and usually from the perspective of those who were the victims of the aggression of the Pechenegs.

In the second subheadings, the author touches upon archaeological sources and the difficulties of identifying and categorising data in the context of the Pechenegs. In the third part of the introduction, the author briefly analyses the works on the Pechenegs to date and states the aim of his own study. The author's aim in writing this book was to draw a general characterisation of the Pecheneg history and to show the points that influenced the Pechenegs' relations with the outside world (Paroń, 2021, p.19).

The first main chapter is divided into three subsections as well: 1.1 *The Great Steppe. General Comments*, 1.2 *Black Sea-Caspian Steppe. Physical Geography* ve 1.3 *The Land Scape of*

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the Black Sea-Caspian Steppe in the Accounts of Travellers and Geographers. From Herodotus to Jan Patocki.

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the steppe geography in general and the Black Sea-Caspian steppes in more depth. The physical characteristics, climate, flora, and fauna of this geography are presented to the reader and it is targeted to visualise the geography of the steppe in the minds of the reader. In the last part, a historical perspective is formed by presenting the historical development of steppe geography through the eyes of authors such as Herodotus, Strabo, Ptolemy, Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, Giovanni da Pian del Carpine, William of Rubruck, Ibn Faḍlān, Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, Maciej of Miechów, and Jan Potocki.

The second main chapter is an overview of the nomadic peoples who lived in the Black Sea steppes. It is analysed under three subheadings: 2.1 *Era of the Dominance of Iranian Nomads*, 2.2 *Gothic Episode*, 2.3 *Period of Dominance of Turkic Nomads*.

Firstly, the dominance in the Black Sea steppes was belongs to the peoples who are accepted as Iranian-speaking according to the author, these peoples were the Cimmerians, Scythians and Sarmatians. As of the 3rd century AD, Germanic-speaking peoples were active in the Black Sea steppes. After the Germanic Goths, the dominance of Turkic-speaking peoples in the Black Sea steppes is discussed. This period begins with the arrival of the Huns in the Black Sea steppes and ends with the Mongol invasion (Paroń, 2021, p.66). At this point, the author chose to repeat the conclusions previously accepted in European historiography without investigating them in detail.

The third main chapter is analysed with three subheadings: 3.1 *The Problem of Etnogenesis*, 3.2 *Pechenegs on the Transvolgan Steppe*, 3.3 *The Pechenegs' War with Magyar. Migration to the Black Sea Steppe*.

The author in the first subheading notes that there is no surviving legendary origin narrative (*origo*) concerning the Pechenegs. Then, Paul Pelliot's idea of the possible identity of the Pei-ju with the Pechenegs, who are listed as a member of the T'ie-lê unit in the *Book of Sui* by Wei Zheng, is briefly scrutinised (Paroń, 2021, p.85). Next, the activities and settlement of the Pechenegs in the 8th and 9th centuries are analysed in the context of the Uyghur report written in Tibetan, the Kangar ethonym in *De administrando imperio* and the possible Pecheneg - Ashina connection. The opinions of researchers in this context such as K. Czeglédy, O. Pritsak, J. Marquart, P. Golden, K. H. Menges are also discussed.

Paroń, could not disregard the possibility of a connection between the Pechenegs and the Ashina. However, he would like to ask some questions about this possible tie. The first question he raises is: "Which branch of the Ashina do the Pechenegs have links with?" He also notes that if it is accepted that the Hor tribe mentioned in the Tibetan document refers to the Uyghurs (Paroń, 2021, p.16), the likelihood of this connection would be strengthened. This is because, as stated in the report, it would also prove the hostility between the Pechenegs and the Uyghurs. However, he also does not dismiss the possibility that the Hors might refer to the Oghuz. If this possibility is true, the Pechenegs might have established relations with the West Göktürks. Both

possibilities suggest that the Pechenegs may have been a noteworthy political influence in the amid Transvolga and Dzhungaria region in the 8th century (Paroń, 2021, p.94).

The second subheading analyses the possible places of residence and activities of the Pechenegs in Transvolga region in the light of the information provided by authors such as Ibn Rusta, al-Gardīzī, al-Bakrī, al-Marwazī, Ibn Faḍlān and Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus. The possible relations of the Pechenegs with the Khazars, Uzes, Kipchaks, Slavs and Hungarians in this region and the probable reasons for the wealth of the Pechenegs and prosperous lifestyle in Transvolga are also another subject of this subheading (Paroń, 2021, p.101-103).

The third subheading examines the reasons behind the Pechenegs' migration from the Transvolga to the Northern Black Sea, the analysis of the possible Khazar-Uzes alliance and its outcome for the Pechenegs. Afterwards, in the light of Byzantine, Latin and Muslim sources; and the views of researchers such as C. A. Macartney, J. Marquart, Gy. Györffy, L. Várady, A. Pritsak, J. B. Bury, P. Golden, H. Łowmiański on the chronology of the Hungarian - Pecheneg war or wars that triggered the migration of Hungarians to the Carpathians and the geography of this war or wars are also analysed. The author then finishes this section by investigating the location of Lebedia (Λεβεδία) and Atelkouzou ('Ατελκούζου).

The fourth main chapter is divided into next subsections: 4.1. *Introduction*, 4.2. *Political and Social Organization*, 4.3. *Economy*, 4.4 *Military*, 4.5. *The Pechenegs' Ethnic Identity and Value System*.

The first subheading begins with a discussion of the process by which the Volga and Danube Bulgarians abandoned their nomadic life and became sedentary. The aim of this discussion is to prepare the reader for the chapters on the socio-cultural and economic life of the Pechenegs by briefly explaining the extent to which the ties between nomads and settlers can be strengthened and the time and space required for this process to take place.

The author starts the second subheading by discussing the methodological and terminological difficulties in examining the socio-cultural and political institutions of a specific people and analyses the difficulties they create in interpretation. In this context, the definition of the term 'state' and which level of development of a people meets the definition of 'state' are and the conditions under which the definition of 'state' can be applied to nomadic peoples is also examined. The political institutions of the Pechenegs are investigated through the Greek terms (*ethnos* 'τὸ ἔθνος', *laos* 'ὁ λαός', *genea* 'ἡ γενεά', *thema* 'τὸ θέμα', *meros* 'τὸ μέρος') Porphyrogenitus uses for the political organisations of the Pechenegs. Subsequently, the existence of a privileged ruling class among nomads and tribal hierarchy is examined with the aid of additional written sources, namely those pertaining to Byzantine and Muslim history. Additionally, the following topics are discussed: whether social class differences can be recognized through Pecheneg kurgan findings, the presence of slaves among the Pechenegs, Pecheneg tribal hierarchy, the concept of *primus inter pares*, and the succession system of the Pechenegs. The potential influence of the nomads' relations with the outside world on their political structure is also topics of mentioned by author. The opinions of Gy. Németh, A. Pritsak, E. Tryjarski, S. Pletneva, V. Spinei, A. M. Khazanov, A. V. Marey on the questions of whether the

political structure of the Pechenegs can be considered a 'state' argued, and after this summary, the author presents his own views and defines the Pecheneg political organisation as a segmentary structure. According to Paroń, absence of strong rulers and the lack of a clear distinction between rich and poor in Pecheneg grave finds suggests that the social structure was closer to egalitarianism and the political stance of the Pechenegs consisted more of a tribe unity that reflexively reacted to dangers rather than a systematic organisation (Paroń, 2021, p.159).

In the introduction of the third subheading, the nomadic economy is briefly described and after a concise analysis of animal husbandry in the nomadic economy and the Pechenegs. Then the dietary habits of nomads, tools and animals used as transportation, hunting, the sociological and psychological perception of agriculture by nomadic mindset, agriculture in the Pechenegs and its relationship with agricultural societies, crafts in nomads and the Pechenegs, mining in the Pechenegs, the supply of daily use tools (sandals, boots, bags, etc.), trade and looting raids are the topics discussed in this section.

In the fourth subchapter, the author begins with quotations from Al-Mas'ūdī, John Skylitzes and Anna Komnena on the courage of the Pechenegs. After briefly describing the basic elements of nomadic military power, the probable number of troops of the Pechenegs in the light of written sources and the military tactics of the Pechenegs are analysed by giving examples from other nomadic communities. The seasonal patterns of the Pechenegs' looting campaigns, their military organisation, the use of banners, the weapons they used, and the equipment they used on horses are examined in this section in the context of written and archaeological sources.

In the fifth subheading, a brief summary of what ethnic identity is and the nature and formation of ethnic identity is presented. In this context, the ethnic identity and value system of the Pechenegs and nomads are investigated with examples. The author analyses the differences in the way of life of settlers and nomads (daily life, religion, laws) and the impact of this possible conflict on the formation of identity. After discussing the impact of religion on identity, the author investigates the attempts to spread the monotheistic religion among the Pechenegs and its spiritual and mental impact on their identity. The impact of shamanism on the burial customs of Eurasian nomads and Pechenegs is another phenomenon analysed by the author. Then, the relations of the Pechenegs and nomads with the outside world are scrutinised in the basis of the sources. Naturally, most of these sources often view the events from their own perspective and associate the nomads with great atrocities. The author emphasises that the reason for this "ruthless barbarian" perception can be sought in the contrast between the Roman and Judeo-Christian warrior cult and war ethics with the warrior cult and war ethics of the nomadic world (Paroń, 2021, p. 234-235).

The fifth main chapter is divided four subsections: 5.1 *Borders and Internal Territorial Divisions of the Newly-Created Patzinacia*, 5.2. *Political Relations between the Pechenegs and Their Neighbours*, 5.3 *The History of the Pechenegs before 945. At a Political Crossroads*, 5.4 *The Pechenegs as Allies of the Byzantine Empire*.

In the first subheading, the settlement and sphere of influence of the Pechenegs in the Black Sea steppes are analysed in the framework of the borders given by Porphyrogenitus for

'Patzinacia'. The places of dwelling of the eight Pecheneg tribes placed in Patzinacia by Porphyrogenitus are also examined and the reader is helped to visualise Patzinacia with the help of a map (Paroń, 2021, p. 251). In the second sub-headings, the relations of the Pechenegs with Byzantium, Rus', Bulgarians and Khazars are shortly touched upon. The third sub-chapter addresses briefly their relations with the Rus', Danube Bulgars, Serbs and Magyars before 904, centred on the Byzantine Empire. In the following period, the political conjuncture (trade, alliances, conflicts) in the Northern Black Sea and the Balkans is analysed with the inclusion of the Pechenegs in the calculation. Another subject analysed in this section is the role of Pechenegs in the Byzantine - Bulgarian conflicts before 945 and the role of the Pechenegs in this struggle and which alliance they were inclined to in which war. Al-Mas'ūdī's account of the attack of four Turkic tribes on the fortress of Walandar is, where this event took place, which tribes and historical events it points to, and the role of the Pechenegs are argued. The last subheading is devoted to analysing the relations between Byzantium and the Pechenegs in the first half of the 10th century and the events that gave rise to, developed and decreased these relations, also, how the annihilation of the Khazars by the Rus' affected the Pechenegs.

The sixth main chapter is divided three subsections: 6.1 *The Rus', Pechenegs and Uzes (972-1036)*, 6.2 *The Byzantine Empire and the Pechenegs on the Eve of Their Migration to the Balkans*, 6.3 *Pecheneg Migration to the Balkans*.

The first subtitle begins with a description of the political situation in Rus' after the murder of Svyatoslav I (r. 945-972) by the Pechenegs in 972 and the civil war until Vladimir I (r. 978-1015) became the sole ruler in 980. After Vladimir I, the author continues his narrative with the Rus' - Pecheneg relations. The attacks of the Pechenegs on the Rus' and this endless aggression of the Pechenegs is one of the questions sought to be answered by the author also (Paroń, 2021, p. 296-297). One of the most important points of this section is the author's criticism of the inclination of many researchers to see nomads as pawns of major political powers (Paroń, 2021, p. 300-301). Then the actions of the Uzes, who came to the Black Sea steppes with the collapse of the Khazars, and their relations with the Rus' and the Pechenegs are discussed. The missionary efforts of Bruno of Querfurt (c. 974-100) on the Pechenegs, the possible influence of Bolesław I the Brave (r. 992-1025) on this activity, the Polish (Piast dynasty) - Pecheneg relations in general, the role of the Pechenegs in the succession struggle in Kievan Rus' during the last periods of Vladimir I reign and after his death is another points analysed. The second subheading briefly discusses the silence of Byzantine sources on the Pechenegs with one exception until 1027 after Sviatoslav I's second expedition to the Balkans and the possible reasons for this, then, the activities of the Pechenegs in the Balkans between 1027 and 1036 and their relations with Byzantium and their outcomes. In the final subheading, initially focuses on the leadership crisis between the Tyrach and Kegenes, following the defeat of the Pechenegs by Kiev in 1036, and the increasing Uz pressure. Then the activities of Kegenes, who accepted Byzantine vassalage, and his political pressure on Tyrach and his Pechenegs, the behaviour of Kegenes, and his possible political intentions were questioned and analysed by the author. Then the migration of Tyrach's Pechenegs from the Black Sea steppes to the Balkan in the winter of 1046 - 1047 and its motives, Tyrach's relations with Kegenes and the Byzantine Empire are the topics discussed and analysed.

The seventh and final main chapter is divided into four subheadings: 7.1 *The Pechenegs in Byzantium: 1047-1091*, 7.2 *The Pechenegs in the Arpadian Kingdom*, 7.3 *The Pechenegs in Rus'*, 7.4 *The Pechenegs under Piast Dynasty Rule (?)*.

The author begins the first subtitle with a section analysing events that show how optimistic the Byzantine Empire was about the possible integration of the Pechenegs, believing that they would be fully integrated into the Byzantine Empire. The author questions the realism of Byzantine integration intentions from the Pechenegs' point of view. Then author analyses the Byzantine precautions against the rebellion of the Pechenegs sent to fight the Seljuks to Anatolia, the possible causes of the rebellion and the consequences of the Byzantine-Pecheneg struggle in the Balkans, which ended with a 30-year peace treaty on 1053. The position of the Pechenegs, who were almost completely independent of Byzantium for 40 years after the treaty (Paroń, 2021, p. 340-341), is examined in comparison with the political formation of the Danube Bulgarians, who had arrived in the Balkans before them. After Romanos IV Diogenes (r. 1068-1071) came to power, the campaigns of the role of the Pechenegs with the emperor in the east (Kaisareia, Syria, Malazgirt) and the campaigns in the west tried to analysed by author within the question of whether their participation in these campaigns was motivated by their loyalty to Byzantium or by economic motivation. The cultural transformation of the Pechenegs during this period and their cultural influence on the villages where they settled are examined within the framework of Attaleiates' term *mixobarbaroi*¹ and in the light of archaeological data. The question of the Byzantine Empire's dominance in the Northern Balkans and the causes and consequences of the Byzantine cities there acting more freely than the Empire, and the role of the Pechenegs in these events and in Byzantine internal politics, their relations with the rebellious Byzantine elites, and how they exploited the weaknesses of the Byzantine Empire are also discussed. The conflict of Alexios I Komnenos (r. 1081-1118) with the Paulicians² and the role of the Pechenegs in this struggle is another subject also analysed. A new wave of migration to the Balkans in 1086 (Paroń, 2021, p. 359), as reported by Anna Komnena, and the identity of those who made this migration are also discussed in this section. The last part of this subsection focuses on Alexios' efforts to re-establish Byzantine sovereignty in the Danube fortresses and his conflict with the Pechenegs until the Battle of Lebounion (1091). In 1121, another migration from the Black Sea steppes to the Balkans took place and Byzantium wanted to stop the protagonists of this migration movement. Therefore, the Battle of Beroia took place in the spring of 1122 and Byzantium inflicted a heavy defeat on these nomads (Paroń, 2021, 367.) These events are analysed in the scope of Niketas Choniates, Theodore Prodromos, Michael the Syrian and Primary Rus' Chronicle, Chronicon Vindobonense, Snorri Sturluson, and

¹ It is a term that used in the Ancient Greek and Byzantine periods, emphasize by the to define what lay outside their own world. The "us versus them" distinction is also reflected here by the term "barbaroi." However, when combined with the term "mixo" indicates that the society in question was, at some point, acknowledged to have begun the process of Hellenization (Kazhdan, 1991a, p. 1386).

² It was an Iconoclast Christian sect centered in Eastern Anatolia. Between 843 and 879, they posed challenges to the Byzantine Empire along its eastern borders and established a political power centered in Tephrike (present-day Divriği). Their leader was Karbeas. They allied with the Muslims—who were the rising power in the East—against Byzantium (Kazhdan, 1991b, p. 1606).

the ethnic origin of the nomadic element defeated by Byzantium in this battle is inspected. Another interesting point is that Niketas Choniates reports that when the war ended, the emperor organised a *Pecheneg festival* in the capital to celebrate the victory (Paroń, 2021, p. 367). The use of the name Pecheneg in this account is one of the questions analysed by the author. The author's opinion on this issue is that the use of the Pecheneg ethnos name is a direct reflection of the Komnenos dynastic ideology. The defeat of the Pechenegs, who had been the scourge of the empire for centuries, by the Komnenos and the celebration of this defeat would increase the power and legitimacy of the dynasty in the empire. This point of view of the author is extremely interesting and worth mentioning (Paroń, 2021, p. 371).

In the second subheading, the possible past origin of the ethnos name 'besse, besseni' given to the Pechenegs in Hungarian is briefly touched upon, followed by a brief account of Thonuzoba's migration to Hungarian lands during the reign of Prince Taksony (d.972), the Pecheneg raid in the *Life of Saint Stephen*, the dating of the raid and the possible reasons for the raid are discussed. The role of the Pechenegs in the 1068, 1071 raids by nomads on Hungarian lands during the reign of King Solomon (1063-1074) and the attack on the Hungarian throne in alliance of King Solomon and the Cun chief Kutesk is also analysed. Another topic examined is the term *Cunus* and its meaning in the early Hungarian chronicles. Apart from the raids, the fact that the Pechenegs came to the Hungarian lands in search of a 'permanent and safe home' is one of the subjects addressed by the author. The fact that King Stephen I (r. 1000-1038) encouraged the immigration of foreigners in the admonitions he left to his son is one of the important elements proving that these migrations were supported by the first Árpáadian kings (Paroń, 2021, p. 378; Vambéry, 1923, p. 93-94). Accordingly, the number and settlement of Pechenegs in the Hungarian Kingdom, their duties in the kingdom, their legal status, their conversion to Christianity and their integration process are also briefly touched upon in this section.

The third subheading examines the place of the Pechenegs in Rus' dominion as of the 12th century, how Cherni Klobuci was formed, the tasks of Cherni Klobuci, the place of the Pechenegs in this organisation, and the toponyms left by the Pechenegs. The fourth subheading examines the raids probably carried out by the Pechenegs on the Piast lands, possible Pecheneg toponyms and their duties in these lands according to archaeological evidence.

In summary: the work is well organised and the historical presence of the Pechenegs, first to the Transvolga, then to the Black Sea steppes and through the Balkans, and the Hungarian kingdom are skillfully presented to the reader. In addition to the English translations of the written sources used, the original texts are indicated with the help of footnotes, which is very useful for those who want to work on the original text. At the same time, rather than being a political history of the Pechenegs, the socio-cultural life of the Pechenegs, the investigation of the possible sociological and psychological reasons for the actions of the Pechenegs, and the approach to historical events from a nomadic point of view are only some of the details that make this work unique. At the same time, the author's attempt to break the prejudices about the nomads is extremely important. In this respect, it will undoubtedly increase the studies on the nomadic role in European history. This work is an important reference book for anyone interested in nomadic and Pecheneg history.

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