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## A DISAPPEARED PEOPLE AND A DISAPPEARED LANGUAGE THE CUMANS AND THE CUMAN LANGUAGE IN HUNGARY

### Özet

Türk kabilelerinin 11-12. yüzyılda batıya doğru yayıldığı süreçte Kıpçak ve Kuman boyları Avrasya bozkırlarını işgal etmişti. Komşu devletlerle ve hızla gelişmekte olan Moğol İmparatorluğu ile çatışmaların ardından, Peçenekler ve Kumanlar batıya doğru göç ederek Macar Krallığının tahsis ettiği topraklara yerleşmişlerdi. Sonraki yüzyıllarda her iki boy Macarlar arasında etnik ve dilsel bakımdan yavaş yavaş asimile olmuş ve 17. yüzyılda Kuman dili yok olmuştur. Ancak, bir iki eksik ve tahrif olmuş metnin yanı sıra Macarcadaki Kumanca kişi adları ve coğrafi isimler ile Kumanca ödünc sözcükler, Kıpçak dillerinin tarihi için de önemli kaynaklardır. Bu çalışma, Macaristan'daki Türk etnik grupların dilleri ve tarihleri hakkında genel bilgi vermeyi amaçlamaktadır.

### Anahtar Kelimeler

Türk dillerinin tarihi, Kıpçak/Kuman boylarının tarihi, Macarcadaki Kumanca ödünclemeler, Kıpçak dili tarihi, dil ölümü

### Abstract

Kipchak and Cuman groups conquered the Eurasian steppe during the course of the 11-12th century western expansion of the Turkic tribes. After various conflicts with the neighbouring states and the rapidly emerging Mongol Empire the Petchenegs and later the Cumans fled and settled down in the Hungarian Kingdom. During the following centuries they assimilated to the Hungarians both ethnically and linguistically, and by the 17th century the Cuman tongue was extinct. However, Cuman loanwords in Hungarian as well as personal and geographical names together with the existing few corrupted texts are precious sources for the history of the Kipchak languages. The present paper aims at giving an overview of the history and the languages of these one-time Turkic ethnic groups in Hungary.

### Keywords

History of Turkic languages, the history of Kipchak/Cuman tribes, Cuman loanwords in Hungarian, Kipchak language history, language death

For long periods, the nomadic Magyars lived together with different Turkic tribes, and the important role that these played both in the eventual ethnic formation of the Hungarian people and the formation of their language is widely known. However, it is less well known that in 895 three Kabar tribes entered the Carpathian Basin along with the conquering Magyars, or that during the following centuries different peoples of Turkic origin also settled in the lands of the Hungarian Kingdom. Primary mention among those who joined the Hungarians is due to the Pechenegs and the Cumans; in a centuries-long process, their **ethnic structures** and **languages** were finally assimilated to those of the Hungarians.

### The Pechenegs

In the 10th and 11th centuries, the main Pecheneg areas were the valleys of the Don and Donets, the shores of the Sea of Azov and the Crimea, the upper reaches of the Dnieper and Dniester, later Moldova and Valachia. In the 10th century, pressure from the Kievan principality drove waves of Uz people into the Carpathian basin. Hungarian chronicles offer data on these immigrations. Thus Anonymus, who lived around the turn of the 13th century reports that *Thonuzoba* (< \**Toŋuz aba*), the head of the *Tomai* clan, received land from prince *Taksony* (Lat. *Tocsun*, second half of 10th century). Many documents mention the Pechenegs, and also about 75 place-names (e.g. *Besenyőd*, *Besenyőtelek*, *Máriabesnyő*, *Nagybesenyő*) preserve their memory, containing the element *besenyő* [bešen'ō] (= *Pecheneg*). It has been noted that no large Pecheneg centres developed from any of their settlements. We know that there were Pecheneg settlements in the neighbourhood of Lake Fertő, in the region of Lake Balaton, along the Rába, Danube, Dráva, Körös and Maros rivers. (GYÖRFFY 1939; Rásonyi 1984: 64-66).

No written testimony by the Pechenegs themselves has been preserved. However, the personal names in the Byzantine, Slavic and Hungarian are sources of information on their language. The most important source is an account containing names of Pecheneg clans, chiefdoms and strongholds in Constantine Porphyrogennitus, *De Administrando Imperio* (950) (Németh 1921). The assumption that they are relatives of the Cumans and that their language is Kipchak is also based on Constantine. It is a difficult task to clarify the Pecheneg place names in Hungary and to ascertain the identity of their language. To determine Pecheneg loans in Hungarian and to separate them from the Cuman stratum appears close to impossible. LIGETI, for example considered the words *szúnyog* 'mosquito' and *csősz* 'field-guard' to be Pecheneg loans (Ligeti 1986: 123-124; 95-96).

### Kun, Cuman, Kipchak

The Kitay migration of the 9-10<sup>th</sup> centuries causes the Kipchak tribes to leave their lands in South-West Siberia and migrate further west to appear later around the Pontus in the 11th century. According to Marwazī:

“To them [the Turks] (also) belong the Qūn; these came from the land of Qitāy, fearing the Qitā-khan. They (were) Nestorian Christians, and had migrated from their habitat, being pressed for pastures... The Qūn were followed [or pursued] by a people called the Qāy, who, being more numerous and stronger than they, drove them out of these [new?] pasture lands. They then moved on to the territory of the Shārī, and the Shārī migrated to the land of the Tūrkämäns, who in their turn shifted to the eastern parts of the Ghuzz country. The Ghuzz Turks then moved to the territory of the Bajanāk, near the shores of the Armenian (?) sea.” (Minorsky 1942: 95-104).

In the sources on these events the Kuns (Qūn-lar) appear under different names. The Armenian Matthew of Edessa (Matevos Urhayetsi) speaks about *χartešk*, while they are mentioned as *Κούμανοι*, *Κόμανοι* in the Byzantine sources, *Comani*, *Cumani*, *Cuni* in the Latin sources, *Valwen* in the Germanic sources and *Половци* in the Russian sources. As Németh (1940) proved these different denominations are translations of the name *Kuman* ~ *Koman* meaning ‘pale, yellowish, faded’. Russian annals also support that the names Kuman and Kun are identical. This means that Hungarian conserved *Kun*, one of the names of the Cumans. Most of the Arabic and Persian sources describing the events of the 11-12th centuries mention this tribe as Kipchak, who had left their territories due to the Kitay expansion. Originally the Kipchaks and the Kuns or Kumans are two different tribes, but in the course of the migrations in the 11th century they joined each other and became united. Consequently, in the 12th century sources there is no difference among those mentioned under the names Kipchak, Cumans or Polovets. These ethnonyms have to be considered merely as political distinctions (Marquart 1914: 140).

Rubruck in his famous report describes the Cumans and the Kipchaks as being the same (*Comani qui dicuntur Capchat* ~ *Capchac* – WYNGAERT I. 194):

“Here the Cumans, who are called Chapchat used to pasture their flocks... and this country which extends from the Danube to the Tanais [Don] was all inhabited by the Chapcat Comans”.  
(Rockhill)

### The settlement of the Cumans in Hungary



#### Settlement areas of the Cumans in Hungary

(Source: Pálóczi-Horváth, A. (1989))

The contacts between the Cumans, who lived in the Eastern European steppes (Lat. *Cumania*, *terra Cumanorum*), and the Hungarian Kingdom had started much before the settlement of the Cumans in Hungary. These contacts can be characterized sometimes by hostility and sometimes by alliances of equals. After the Mongol raid in the years 1222-23 (the Battle of the Kalka River), when the Mongols had beat the Cuman lord Köten (Lat. *Cuthen*) and the allied Russian troops the Hungarians and the Cumans established more close relations. In this period the Dominican monks set out for mission, and in consequence, the Cuman

lord *Bortz* (< \*Bars? ~ Borč? ~ Burč?), who in 1227 lived to the north of the Dniester, converted to christianity in the service of king András II (1205-1235) and his son prince Béla (later king Béla IV – 1235-1270) and came under the rule of the Hungarian Kingdom. As prince Béla, when a “young king” (Lat. *rex iunior*), ruled not only the Eastern part of Hungary but also the land of the Cumans (Moldova and Wallachia) took the name *rex Cumaniae* (1233). A Cuman episcopate named Milkó (see today Milkov, Romania) was set up in 1227 in the lands east to the Karpathians in the region of the rivers Olt, Danube and Seret. These events served as an excuse for the Mongolian raid against Hungary (see the letter of Batu to Béla IV). After 1237 the advancement of the Mongols brought about the migration of the peoples of the steppe making them move straight towards west. Under the rule of khan Köten the Cumans asked refuge from Béla IV and in 1239 settled down in Hungary. The king

allocated them in the central part of the country in the region of the rivers Danube and Tisza. Rogerius (a 13th century Italian chronicler on the Tatar invasions, died in 1266) wrote:

“The king of the Cumans started to roam with his gentles and common people and with their herds of cattle about Hungary, and these huge herds caused very much harm in the pastures, lands, gardens, orchards, vineyards and many other good things of the Hungarians...”

The arising conflicts became everyday incidents between the nomad Cumans and the settled Hungarians. Before the Mongol raid in the spring of 1240 news had spread on a Cuman – Mongol alliance among the already discontented Hungarians, and Khan Köten (Kötöny) was killed. In response the Cumans ravaged the central part of the country and left it toward south moving on to the Balkans to the lands of the Bulgarians. A month later Hungary was destroyed in the Mongol raid.

The second and final Cuman settlement followed in 1246. The Cumans, now living on the plains of the Lower Danube and whose situation was getting worse because of the internal wars, came back on the call of Béla IV, who was rebuilding his country. Béla married István (Lat. Stephanus), the crown prince with a Cuman maid, who got baptized as Erzsébet (Lat. Elisabet), and designated herself in her seal as *filia imperatoris Cumanorum* (daughter of the king of the Cumans) (Pálóczi Horváth 1989: 68). It is unclear whether this Cuman ruler was Köten or his descendant. Under the sovereignty of István V (1270-1272) his wife, Erzsébet the Cuman became queen, which signed the peak of the Cuman influence. After his death his son ascends the throne with the name László (Lat. Ladislaus, 1272-1290), but his mother ruled for a long period. László IV won several campaigns against the Czechs with his army reinforced by 16 thousand Cuman cavalry men. His nickname Kun (the Cuman) is also a sign of the fact that the Cumans were given important assignments during his reign. His wife was from the Angevin dynasty but he lived among the Cumans and wore Cuman dress. In the sources even the names of three of his concubines are recorded: *Ayduva* (Lat. *Aydua* ~ *Edua* < \**aydoğa* ‘the moon rised’), *Küpçeç* (*Kupchech* < \**köp sač* ‘(with) lots of hair’) and *Mandola*. Christian Europe disapproved this pagan way of life of László IV and sent a legate of the Pope to the country. The Cumans rose up against the restrictions imposed on them but were defeated in the battle on Lake Hód in 1280. A small group left the country and moved to Wallachia, but most of them stayed. According to a 1347 document they lived in felt tents (Gyárfás III: 72: *filtreas domus habentes* ‘their homes are made of felt’), but in the following centuries they slowly gave up their nomadic way of life.

According to the second Cuman Act of 1279 seven tribes (Lat. *generatio*) settled down in Hungary. It is not possible to define precisely the territories they occupied neither through research of documents nor of the history of settlements and administration of later periods (Györffy 1953). The Cumans settled to the plains of the country, where the Mongols depopulated and lay waste to the lands: on the lands of the king, where no nobles or serfs remained around the rivers Danube, Tisza, Maros and Temes. The *Borčol* (1266: *Borchol*, 1288: *Borchovl* < \**Burč-oylu*) tribe settled between the rivers Maros and Temes. Their names correspond to the tribe name of the *Burčeviči* ‘sons of Burč’ who played a role in the 11th century events around the river Donets according to the Russian annals and also to the Kipchak tribe *Burčoylu* of the Golden Horde. The *Čertān* (1347, 1367: *Cherthan* < \**čortan* ~ *čurtan* ‘pike’) tribe settled in the lands between the Danube and the Tisza rivers. Their name corresponds to the name of the steppe Kipchak *Čurtan* tribe. The name of this region that in a source from 1418 appears as *Chortyan-szék* ‘Chortyan province’ (*de sede Chortyan*) changed to *Halas-szék* ‘Fishy province’ in the 15th century and a Cuman administrative unity was established.

The change of *Chortyan-szék* becoming *Halas-szék* in Hungarian shows that bilingualism still exists in this period but the use of Hungarian becomes stronger. The lands between the rivers Tisza and Körös belonged to the tribe *Olāš* (1328: *Olaas*, 1344: *Olas* < \**ulaš*). This name corresponds with the data *Ulaševiči* in the Russian annals, but there is a tribe with this name also among the Turkmens (Rásonyi 1984: 203; Golden 1990: 280). The tribe *Kor* (1315: *Kool*, 1348, 1350, 1368: *Koor* < \**qoγur* ‘a little; few’) settled on the lands to the south of the river Maros. So far no eastern correspondence of this name was found in the sources. The clarification of the remaining three tribe names has been unsuccessful so far. According to the documents the territory between the rivers Danube and Sárvíz might have been a settled land of a tribe as might have been the territory between the rivers Maros and Körös of another tribe. It is supposed that there was another tribe, the Jassic people (Hungarian *jász* [yās]) (< \**ās*), who settled together with the Cumans, but no written documents concerning it have been found. This people, whose origins are Iranian Alans, appeared in the Latin documents in Hungary at the beginning of the 14th century under this name as neighbours of the Cumans to whom they were similar and as having been given privileges. Gyula Németh resolved the Jassic – Latin glossary from 1422 containing about 40 words and expressions (Németh 1959). The language of the *Jász* living in Hungary, similarly to that of the Cumans, is extinct.

On the basis of the place and personal name materials the Cumans in Hungary can be considered as remnants of the original, historical Cuman clans. It appears that during the migrations caused by the Mongolian raids tribes and clans with the same names apart of Hungary moved also to the Balkans, Anatolia, Türkmenistan, Kazakistan etc. (For the explanations of these ethnonyms see Rásonyi 1957; 1967; 1966-1969).

The legal position of the Cumans was regulated by laws. The head of the clans (Lat. *dominus, comes*) were both military leaders (Lat. *capitaneus*) and judges (Lat. *iudex*). They had their own jurisdiction and appealed to the king only in case of unsettled disagreements. They were free but had to join the king in war times. The royal guards called *nyögér* [nőgēr] (\**nöger* ‘soldier; bodyguard’ ← Moğ. *nöker*; Lat. *neugari*) were Cumans (Németh 1953).

From the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century the inhabitants of the lands between the Danube and the Tisza were called *kiskun* (*Cumani minores*), the inhabitants to the east of the Tisza were called *nagykun* (*Cumani maiores*). According to a map from 1570 the name of the lands between the Danube and the Tisza was *Kunság* (*Cumanorum Campus*).

### The number of Cumans settled in Hungary

There is only one source that informs on the size of the Cuman population arriving to Hungary. According to the above mentioned *Carmen miserabile* written by the eye witness Rogerius, 40.000 Cuman families settled down in 1239 in Hungary. If we consider the medium size of families to be of 4-5 members in this period, their number could mount up to 180.000 – 200.000. Some historians accept the number given by Rogerius as possible, but it might be exaggerated. Györffy (1953) claims that the Cuman population must have been much less, of around 60.000 persons. Having reconstructed the Cuman territories based on documents of later years and using demographical statistics Pálóczi Horváth concluded that in the course of the second Cuman settlement in 1246 their number could possibly reach 70.000 – 80.000 (Pálóczi Horváth 1989: 53). Considering the Middle Ages this was a very relevant population.

## The Cuman language

Both the Cuman and the Petcheneg languages belong to the Kipchak branch of the Turkic languages. The history of the Kipchak languages has not yet been well described. The first data relative to these languages appeared in the dictionary *Diwan Lugat at-Turk* by Mahmud al-Kashgari (1072 or 1077) while the *Tibyan al-lugat at-turki 'ala lisan al-kankli* is a lost dictionary of the Kipchak-type Kangli language and was compiled by Muhammad bin Qays by the order of the Khwarezm shah Jalal ad-Din. A relevant Mamluk Kipchak material survived mostly vocabularies and short descriptions of grammar. The Armenians who migrated to the Crimea and then to Ukraine spoke a Kipchak language and produced a great number of documents written in the Armenian alphabet.

The Cuman language was one of the official languages of the steppe. Concessions, agreements between the Genoese or Venetian colonies and the Golden Horde were usually bilingual. The agreement stipulated in 1333 under the rule of Özbek khan between the Venetians and Temur Qutlugh was edited in Cuman and translated later to Latin (*de Cumanico in Latinum*) by Dominicus Polonus. In 1358 the agreement between the Venetians and Berdibeg Khan ('lord of the Mongols and the Cumans'), which reconfirms the commercial privileges of the Venetians was also bilingual (Ligeti 1981: 11).

The most important monument of the Cuman language is the Codex Cumanicus written in the Latin alphabet. Its peculiarities were studied in detail by Gabain (1959), Ligeti (1981) and Golden'in (1992). The codex is preserved in the Library of St. Mark in Venice and was written by Italian merchants and German missionaries. It contains a Latin-Persian-Cuman vocabulary, religious texts translated from Latin into Cuman, glossaries, grammar observations on the Cuman tongue and Cuman riddles. The first section styled by Ligeti as the *Interpreter's Book* originates in the 13th century while the second part, the *Missionary's Book* was compiled in the beginning of the 14th century (Ligeti 1981).

No documents have survived written by them. Many researchers suppose they had their own writing system, which might have been a kind of the runic script. The idea relies on a 17th century Czech historiographer – also mentioned by Gyárfás without giving his name - who describes the Cumans among the military forces in the 1253 campaign of Béla IV and their use of writing as well.

He claims Cumans were predecessors to the Ottoman Turks, and as backup forces of King Béla they 'destroyed the peaceful life of Christians' and ravaged whole Moravia:

'superest hodieque aliqua barbarorum memoria, non procul Evanczicio et Oslovanensi<sup>1</sup> coenobio insigne templum Christianorum, in quo plurima Cumanorum sepulchra et **saxa, litteris illorum incisa** spectantur; quibus sacis totum fere templi solum statum est, ut ipse vidi' (Gyárfás II. 285-286)

Gyárfás reports there had been attempts to find the tomb stones with Cuman scripts in Oslavany in the second half of the 19th century but he adds he has no information on the result. The passage written in 1667 has certain contradictions. The Czech historian first describes the Cumans as barbarians and then posts that there are Cuman coffins and tomb stones with Cuman epigraphs in a Christian church. It is unlikely that fallen Cuman warriors would have been laid to rest in coffins with engraved sepulchral stones in the course of a military campaign.

<sup>1</sup> Today Ivančice and Oslavany in the South Moravian region of the Czech Republic.

Many researchers on the Cuman writing recall Joinville, a 13th century French chronicler who described a Cuman funeral ceremony:

“... et on lui mit avec lui le meilleur cheval qu'il eût et le meilleur sergent, tout vivant ... Le grand roi des Comains lui bailla une lettre qui s'adressait à leur premier roi, où il lui mandait que ce prud'homme avait très-bien vécu et qu'il l'avait très-bien servi, et le priaît qu'il le récompensât de ses services” (Joinville 1874: 273).

The fact that the source of Joinville was Philippe de Toucy, a knight who had family relations with a Cuman ally of the Latin Empire does not support this information on the existence of Cuman writing in Hungary. According to H. Aydemir (2002: 207-210) a buckle with a runic inscription from a Cuman grave and preserved in the Józsa András Museum of Szolnok county also supports the assumption that the Cumans knew and used the runic script. However, it has not been possible to prove unequivocally that the runic signs on the ring are characters of a script, and the attempts to solve them are not convincing so far. The repetition and the symmetrical position of the characters suggest that their function could have rather been ornamental than of writing. In addition to what concerns the knowledge of writing of the Cumans, the fact that these signs have been found in a Cuman grave as the only existing data can not offer a decisive evidence either.

### The Cuman language in Hungary

No documents remained relative to the Cumans in Hungary recorded by them. Text fragments written down later as well as Cuman dialectal words, loanwords and an *onomasticon* conserved in written documents, personal and place names prove the existence and the use of the Cuman language for a shorter or longer period in Hungary.

István Mándoky classified the monuments of the Cuman language as follows (2012: 79-84; 94-97):

- I. Texts
  1. The Lord's Prayer (Our Father)
  2. the so called song of Halas (and its variants)
  3. a prayer over food
  4. greetings (Salutationes)
  5. counting-out rhymes
- II. Words
  1. Personal and place names of Cuman origin
  2. Cuman loanwords in Hungarian

The Cuman Lord's Prayer (*Pater Noster*) was written down in 1744 by Ádám Kollár court councillor from a man called István Varró, who went to Vienna as an emissary in the delegation of the Cuman Provinces. The seriously corrupted form of the prayer shows that neither the informant knew the language any more. The variants of the prayer were collected by Mándoky, who reconstructed its Cuman translation (Mándoky 2012: 115-140). Very probably the Cuman version dates back to the Reformation or some times after because it is the translation of chapters 6: 90–13 in the Gospel of Matthew used by Protestants. Some 80 variants are known. Based primarily on the text taken down by Kollár Mándoky examined 63 variants:

*Bezén attamaz kenze kikte,  
 szénlészen, szenádon,  
 dösön szenküklön,  
 nitziégen, gérde, ali kékte  
 bezén akó mozne, okné mezne, bergézge,  
 pitbütör, küngön il bézen méne mezne  
 neszembezde, jermezbezge, utrogergenge,  
 iltme bezne, olgya nanga,  
 kútkor bezne, algya manna,  
 szen borszony,  
 boka csalli, bótson igyi tengere.  
 Ammen.*

The reconstructed version of this piece:

*Biziñ atamiz kim-siñ kökte  
 sentlensin seniñ adiñ  
 düšsün seniñ köñlüñ  
 nečik kim ĵerde alay kökte  
 biziñ ekmegimizni ber bizge  
 büt-bütün künde  
 ilt biziñ minimizni  
 nečik kim biz de iyermiz  
 bizge ötrü kelgenge  
 iltme bizni ol ĵamanga  
 qutqar bizni ol ĵamannan  
 sen barsiñ  
 bu küčli bu čin iygi teñri  
 Amen.*

The English translation:

*Our father, who are in heaven,  
 hallowed be your name,  
 let your will come down,  
 on earth as in heaven  
 give our bread to us each-and-every day,  
 forgive us our trespasses  
 as we also forgive it to those who come against us  
 do not lead us to the evil,  
 deliver us from the evil,  
 you exist  
 you mighty, you righteous good lord.  
 Amen.*



Mándoky has also pointed out Hungaricisms in the text, e.g. the word order mirrors the Hungarian word order or the verb *sentlensin* is a voluntative form derived from the Hungarian word *szent* ‘saint, holy’.

An extremely precious philological work of MÁNDOKY is the solution of Cuman children’s counting-out rhymes corrupted almost beyond recognition (Mándoky 2012: 139-155). He distinguished 7 groups of the rhymes. Let here stand an example:

<i>bérem béló</i>	[bērem bēlō]
<i>ékem égő</i>	[ēkem ēgō]
<i>öcsém üszök</i>	[öčēm üsök]
<i>kertem tücsök</i>	[kertem tüčök]
<i>becsém becsek</i>	[bečēm beček]
<i>állam hasad</i>	[állām hășād]
<i>csettem csetteg</i>	[čtettem čteteg]
<i>szegzem szenneg</i>	[segzem senneg]
<i>togzom torcog</i>	[togzom torcog]

MÁNDOKY has reconstructed this piece based on Dobruja Tatar and Kazak parallels:

<i>birim bilew</i>	<i>my one, sharpening stone</i>
<i>ekim egew</i>	<i>my two, rasp</i>
<i>üčüm (üčim) üzük (üzik)</i>	<i>my three, felt (above the top of the tent)</i>
<i>törtüm (törtim) töšek</i>	<i>my four, mattress</i>
<i>bešim beşik</i>	<i>my five, cradle</i>
<i>altım aš iq</i>	<i>my six, knuckle bone</i>
<i>jetim [?]</i>	<i>my seven, [?]</i>
<i>segizim senek</i>	<i>my eight, jug</i>
<i>toğuzum torsuq.</i>	<i>my nine, saddle</i>

The other above mentioned linguistic monuments (the song of Halas, a prayer over food, greetings) came down to us in such corrupted forms that they cannot be considered for linguistic research, and even faking is assumable (Mándoky 2012: 83; 93).

The second large group of the Cuman language monuments in Hungary are represented by words of Cuman origin. One subgroup is made up of Cuman personal names, place names recorded in written sources and documents as well as geographical names of Cuman origin in Hungary of today’s Little Cumania and Great Cumania or of other sites where once Cumans also used to live. The second subgroup is constituted by Cuman loanwords in Hungarian and regional words of Cuman origin in the Hungarian dialects of Cumania.

It was Gyula Németh, who made an attempt to classify the latter subgroup. (Németh 1921; 1932) According to him the Cuman (and the Pecheneg) loanwords constitute a medial layer between the Turkic loans from before the Hungarian conquest of the Carpathian basin and the Turkish loans from the times of the Ottoman conquest of Hungary. More or less 50 Cuman (and the Pecheneg) loanwords belong to this medial layer, e.g. *koboz* ‘lute’, *kobak* ‘gourd; head’, *boza* ‘alcoholic beverage’, *csabak* ‘a fish’, *szúnyog* ‘mosquito’.

LIGETI dealt with the Cumans and the peculiarities of their language in different chapters of his book published in 1986 on the Turkic loanwords in Hungarian (Ligeti 1986: 89-130; 511-519; 538-544). Lately Róna-Tas and Berta worked on 35 words that are certainly Cuman and on 2 with high possibility of being Cuman due to phonetical, chronological, cultural or geographical reasons. The words they consider of Cuman origin are as follows:

- *ákos* [ākoš], *ágos* [āgoš] (< \**akiš*) ‘stream, current’
- *árkány* [ārkāń] (< \**arkan*) ‘a type of lasso’
- *bóda* [bōdā] (< \**baldag* ← Mo) ‘buckler with handle, handle of different arms’
- *barág* [bārāg] (< \**barag*) ‘a big hairy dog’
- *bárca*, *bajca*, (< \**baysa* ← Mo ← Chin)  
*bárca* [bārcā, bāyca, bārca] ‘tag, passport’
- *boza* [bozā] (< \**boza*) ‘alcoholic beverage’
- *buzogány* [buzogāń] (< \**buzgan*) ‘club, mace, reed-mace’
- *csabak* [čābāk] (< \**čabak*) ‘a fish’
- *csolák*, *csollák* [čolāk, čollāk] (< \**čolak*) ‘one armed, blind in one eye’
- *csődör* [čōdör] (< \**čeüdür*, \**čäüdär*, \**čewdür*) ‘stallion’
- *daku* [dāku] (< \**daku* ← Mo *daku*) ‘a short fur coat’
- *daksi* [dākši] (< \**jakši*) ‘good, excellent’
- *kobak* [kobāk] (< \**kabak*) ‘gourd; head’
- *kamcsi* [kāmči], (< \**kamči* ~ *kamši*)  
*kamsi* [kamši] ‘whip’
- *kangyík* [kāndīk] (< \**kanjīka*) ‘saddle strap’  
*kangyika* [kāndīkā]
- *karambél* (< \**karampil*, *karamfil* ← Pe)  
[kārāmbēl] ‘pink; a kind of flower’
- *kajtár* [kāytār] (< \**kaytar*) ‘migrating bird’
- *kíjcs* [kīyc] (< \**kiyiz*) ‘felt’
- *koboz* [koboz] (< \**kobuz*) ‘lute’
- *kalauz* [kālāuz] (< \**kolavuz*);
- *kalóz* [kālōz] (< \**kolavuz*) ‘guide’
- *kuvasz* [kuvās] (< \**kowaz*) ‘a kind of a shepherd dog’
- *komondor* [komondor] (< \**kumandur*) ‘shepherd dog’
- *gügyű* [güdű] (< \**küdägü*) ‘matchmaker’
- *mónár* (köd) [mōnār köd] (< \**munar*) ‘drz summer fog; rainbow’
- *nyögér* [ńögēr] (< \**nögär* ← Mo *nöger*)  
*nyőgér* [ńögēr] ‘soldier; bodyguard of the king’
- *ontok*, *ontog* (< \**ontok*) ‘crumble of bread’
- *özön* (< \**özän*) ‘flood’
- *szágom* [sāgom] (< \**sagim*) ‘smirage’
- *szándok* [sāndok] (< \**sanduk*) ‘(trousseau) box’
- *szongor* [songor] (< \**soŋkur*) ‘a kind of falcon’

- *cötkény* [cötkēń] (< \**sütkän*, \**süttägän*) ‘wolf’s milk’
- *tábor* [tābor] (< \**tabur* ← Mo *dabkur*) ‘military camp’
- *tőzeg* [tőzeg] (< \**tezek*) ‘turf, dried dung’
- *toklyó* [tokyō] (< \**toklu*) ‘one-year-old lamb’

Uncertain are the following ones:

- *csök* [čök] (< \**čök*) ‘feast (at baptism)’
- *kentreg* (< \**kantarga* ← Mo *kantarga*) ‘breast strap’

Apart of the data in the Róna-Tas – Berta monography Mándoky (2012) discusses very rare or by now extinct dialectal words as well in his works, e.g. *saska* [šāškā] ‘pig’ < \**šoška*, and distinguishes two dialects of Cuman in Hungary, the *š* and *č* dialects (Mándoky 2012: 86-87). According to RÁSONYI and LIGETI Cuman must have been a so called *ŷ*-dialect, see (*Gyalán* [dǎlān] ‘personal name’ < \**ŷilan* < *yilan* ‘snake’; *gyaman* [dǎmān] ‘evil, bad’ < \**ŷaman* < *yaman* ‘id.’), and it shows the *a* > *ǎ* change after *č*, see *Küpcsecs* [küpcēcč] ‘personal name’ < \**küpcēcč* < \**köp sač* ‘(with- lots of hair)’ (Rásonyi 1984: 150-151; Ligeti 1986: 540-542). Besides, Ligeti argues the existence of a close e sound in Cuman, which as a rule in Hungarian changes to *ö*, see (*tömörkény* [tömörkēń] < \**temürkän* ‘head of an arrow’, cf. Oghuz *dämrän*; *tőzeg* [tőzeg] ‘turf, dried dung’ (< \**tezek*).

Placenames and personal names relevantly increase the number of linguistic data: *Debrecen* ‘place name’ < *Tepremez* (1280) < *Täprämäz* ‘personal name’ < *täprä-* ‘to move’; *Bolmaz* ‘a place name’ (1411) < \**Bolmaz* ‘personal name’ < *bol-* ‘to be; to become’ (Ligeti 1986: 93; Rásonyi 1984: 121); *Szokor* ~ *Szokur* [sokor] ‘family name’ < *sokur* ‘blind, boss eyed’; *Kocskor* [kočkor] ‘family name’ < *kočkar* ‘lamb’ (Mándoky 2012: 173-188); *Tokszoba* [toksobā] ‘family name and place name’ < *Toksaba* ‘a Cuman family name; full leather bag’ (Rásonyi 1984: 123).

Cuman slang words extinct today and recorded in the 18-19<sup>th</sup> centuries make up a special group. There are words among them with Cuman roots, e.g. *etek* ‘boot’, *gyenge* [d’enge] ‘daughter-in-law’ (Mándoky 2012: 97).

### The language assimilation of the Cumans

For a long time linguistic researches did not even raise the question till what times Cuman could have been in use, when the language assimilation of the Cumans had definitely been concluded. Language shifts usually occur as results of a long time and complex social processes influenced by various factors of different proportions. Written sources speak about the Cumans, talk about their participation in military campaigns, mention ordinances concerning them, their privileges or their settlements, but are silent on the fact whether these people called Cumans spoke the Cuman language. The lack of data does not allow us to give an exact answer to the question until when Cuman was used. Researchers tackling this problem could only present a strongly hypothetical relative chronology precise only to the century. The legate of the Pope visiting Hungary in 1480 wrote as follows on the country:

“In one part of this country live the pagan Tatars who are called Cumans, every year they pay a certain tax to the king...” (**Gyárfás II. 165.**).

As to the report, almost 250 years after they had settled down they apparently lived apart of other peoples which might mean linguistic separation as well.

The next source is a report from 1551 of Sigismund von Herberstein (1486-1566) Austrian diplomat. He visited Hungary at least 30 times for shorter or longer periods, and in this report he says that several languages were spoken in the country. The language he mentions right after Hungarian is Cuman and adds that it is a dialect of the Tatar language. The fact that during his missions in Russia Herberstein encountered peoples and languages of the steppe confirms his statement as correct based on which we can conclude that Cuman was still spoken in this period. However, as it is understood from a report of 1588 the language death as well has already begun:

“There are people under the name *Madschar* who live in great number in dispersed areas around the town *Budun* who have the same culture as the Tatars and one part of them speaks the Tatar language.” (Gyárfás II. 165.)

Another proof of the existence of the Cuman language in the 16th century is most probably the text of Our Father which, as mentioned above, certainly goes back to the Protestant translation of the prayer. However, it is clear from the sources that the language assimilation must have been concluded by the middle or the end of the 17th century, as for example Ferenc Otrókocsi Fóris claimed that the Cumans were not a nationality having a foreign tongue, they spoke Hungarian. (Mándoky 2012: 113).

Among the factors influencing the assimilation both the fact that Hungarian must have had a stronger prestige as also that the Cumans joined Hungarians by their own will surely played important roles. In consequence of the Ottoman conquest the number of the Cumans diminished in even greater proportions than the number of the Hungarians, and this also fastened the process. The presence of another Turkic language in Hungary did not contribute to their language to thrive, as it happened in the Balkans as well, with the exception of Dobruja, where the Cumans got assimilated into the Bulgarian and Romanian peoples.

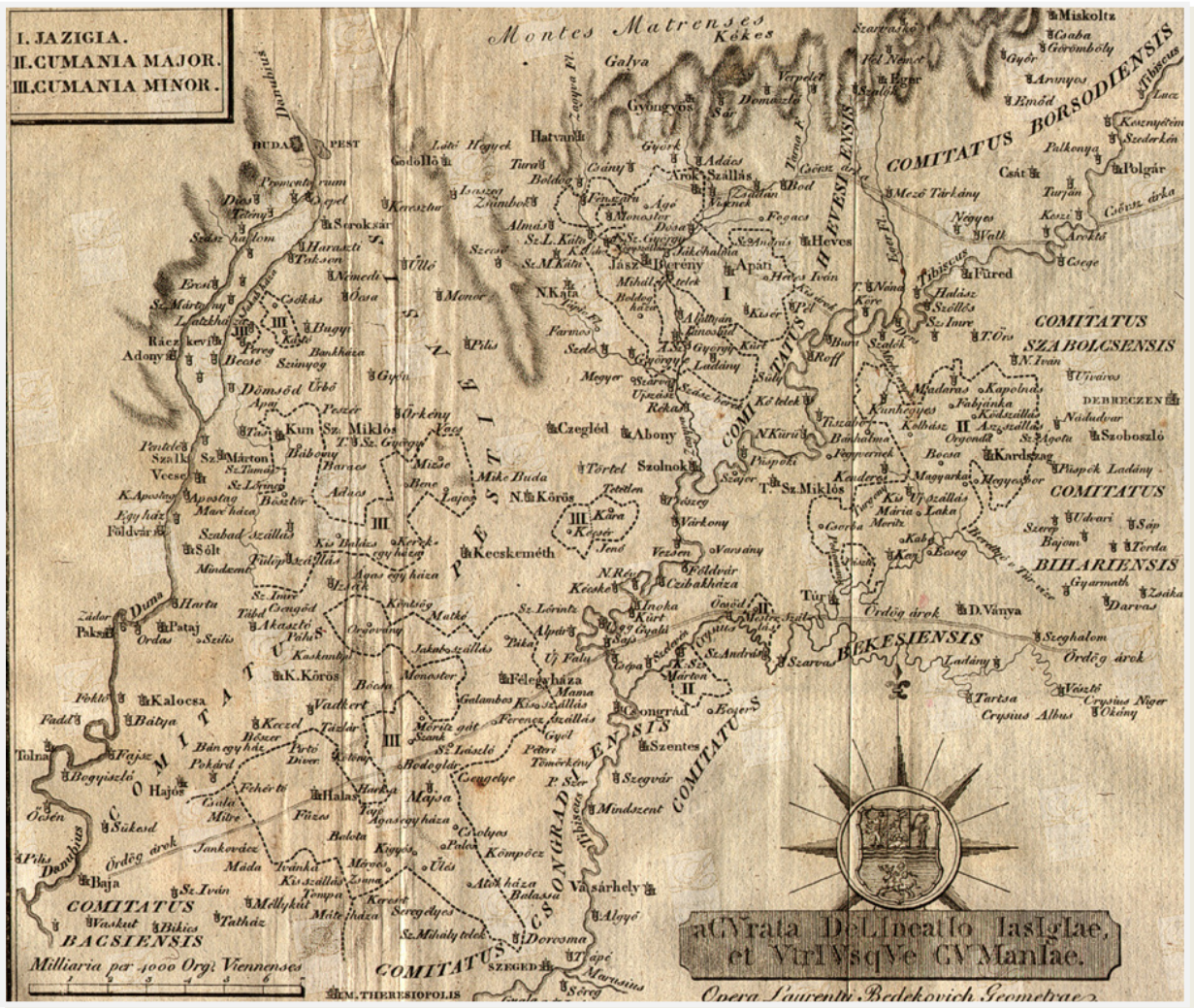


Székelyderzs village church (Romania, Erdel) a part of fresque from 1419: Wrestling of Saint László (1077–1095) and Cuman warrior (fotograph: Tamás Varga 2006)

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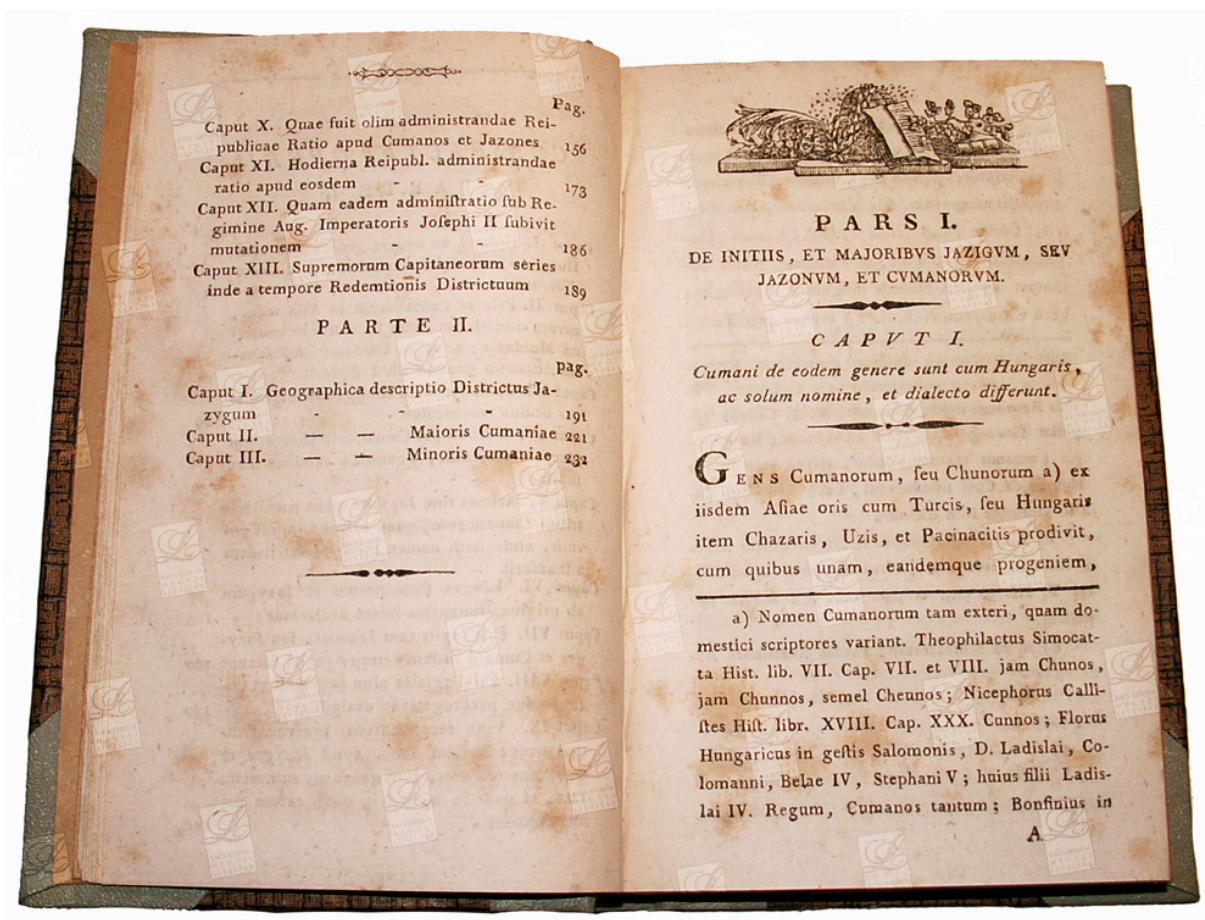
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