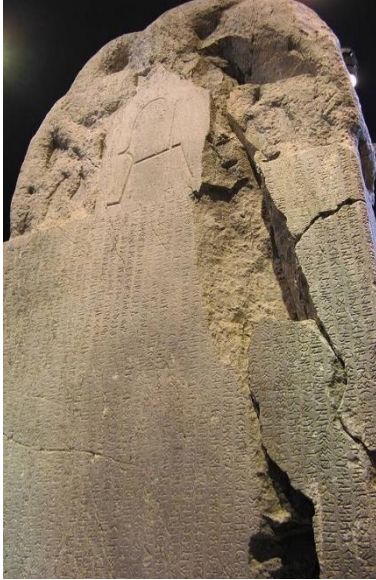


THE CUMAN (KIPCHAK) – Language

OVERVIEW



The first appearance of the term Kipchak as an ethnonym was found in a runic stone inscription that was made during the reign of Uyghur Khagan Eletmish Bilge Khagan in the 8th century.

The *Dîwan Lughat al-Turk* written by Kashgari, claims that the Kipchak Turks and the Oghuz spoke the same Turkish dialect. Similarly, Friar William of Rubrouck who traveled to Mongolia in the 13th century, observed the kinship between the languages of the Cumans and the Uyghurs.

LANGUAGE

It has been claimed that by being a branch of the northern Turkish tribal groups, the Kipchak spoke the same language as the Oghuz.

The Karakhanid lexicographer Mahmud al-Kashgari in his *Dîwan Lughat al-Turk* stated that Kipchak was a dialect between the Oghuz dialect and the Hakaniye (Karakhanid) dialect.

Also, based on information in Anna Comnena's *Alexiad*, some historians have claimed that since the Western Turkic language-speaking Pechenegs and Cumans could freely understand each other, they must have had some connection through their languages.

Based on the existing material, A. B. Boswell stated that the Pechenegs, the Ghuzz (Oghuz) and the Cumans were Turks. In addition, according to Schütz, Oghuz influence was a general feature of the Kipchak languages.

The Russian Turcologist Nikolai Aleksandrovich Baskakov claimed that the Quman (Polovtsy) were a Turkic tribe and their language "belonged to the Kipchak-Polovets sub-category of the Kipchak branch of Turkish".

The Cuman-Kipchak confederation had a multiethnic and multilinguistic structure, and it naturally also contained Mongol and Persian elements. From the second half of the 13th century, Kipchak became a language of everyday use within the Golden Horde, even though official documents were written in Mongolian.

The main source for the Kipchak language, the *Codex Cumanicus* written in the 14th century, used two names for the Kipchak language. The language was called *comanicum* or *chomanico* in the first two sections of the Codex, but in the remainder of the *Codex* the term Tatar is used to refer to the Kipchak's language.

Discussion/Questions

1. Why is it difficult to state almost anything with certainty about the Cuman language?

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