

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE
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THE PECHENECS – MYTHOLOGY

OVERVIEW

Being a nomadic tribe, the Pechenegs did not leave abundant remains of their material culture. We learn about their rituals and habits from the archeological findings found in the burial sites.

Each burial had a rectangular embankment around the grave. The possessions of the deceased like belts, jewelry, bows, arrows, clay pots and animals like horses are the most commonly found items in Pecheneg graves.

MYTHOLOGY

The archaeological materials discovered in the burial sites were valuable weapons like sabres, iron elements of equestrian equipment, as well as some elements of weapons like arrowheads.

Archeological excavations in the burial sites showed that the Pechenegs laid the remains of a riding horse with its harness sacrificed during the funeral feast either on the left side of the body or on top of the deceased.

Some burials indicated that the Pechenegs buried their deceased with the skull of a horse, while others buried with a folded horse skin. There is a claim that the economic status of the deceased determined the quantity of horse remains in graves. For example, a full skeleton found in a grave would indicate great wealth, while an incomplete skeleton would show the lower status of the deceased.

The Pechenegs laid their deceased body in wooden coffins and turned the head of the deceased towards the west.

In the *Russian Primary Chronicle*, the author provided information on the nomadic customs of the Pechenegs who believed that a drinking from a wise and brave opponent's skull brought them good luck.

"When spring came, in 6480 (972), Svyatoslav approached the cataracts, where Kurya, Prince of the Pechenegs, attacked him; and Svyatoslav was killed. The nomads took his head, and made a cup out of his skull, overlaying it with gold, and they drank from it."

Discussion/Questions

1- For what reason were horses buried with the Pecheneg dead?

Readings

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