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[thumb|right|300px|](/wiki/File:State_of_Cuman-Kipchak_(13.)_en.png)[Cuman-Kipchak confederation](/wiki/Cumania) in Eurasia circa 1200

The **Cumans** ([Turkish](/wiki/Turkish_language) and [Azeri](/wiki/Azerbaijani_language): Kuman, *plural*: Kumanlar;[[1]](#cite_note-1) [Template:Lang-hu](/wiki/Template:Lang-hu);[[2]](#cite_note-2) [Template:Lang-gr](/wiki/Template:Lang-gr);[[3]](#cite_note-3) [Kazakh](/wiki/Kazakh_language): Қыпшақтар, *Qıpşaqtar*, قىپشاقتار; [Template:Lang-uz](/wiki/Template:Lang-uz), *Қипчоқлар*; [Template:Lang-cv](/wiki/Template:Lang-cv), *Kăpçaksem*; [Template:Lang-tt](/wiki/Template:Lang-tt), *Qomannar/Qıpçaqlar*; [Template:Lang-ba](/wiki/Template:Lang-ba), *Qıpsaqtar/qomandar*; [Template:Lang-la](/wiki/Template:Lang-la),[[4]](#cite_note-4)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp) [Template:Lang-ro](/wiki/Template:Lang-ro), [Template:Lang-pl](/wiki/Template:Lang-pl), [Template:Lang-ru](/wiki/Template:Lang-ru), **Polovtsy**; [Template:Lang-uk](/wiki/Template:Lang-uk), **Polovtsi**; [Template:Lang-be](/wiki/Template:Lang-be), *Poławcy/kypčaki/kumany*; [Bulgarian](/wiki/Bulgarian_language) and [Macedonian](/wiki/Macedonian_language): Кумани, *Kumani*; [Czech](/wiki/Czech_language): Plavci; [Template:Lang-ka](/wiki/Template:Lang-ka), *Qivçaqi, Qipçaḡi*; [German](/wiki/German_language): Falones, Phalagi, Valvi, Valewen, Valani) were a [Turkic](/wiki/Turkic_people)[[2]](#cite_note-2)[[5]](#cite_note-5)[[6]](#cite_note-6)[[7]](#cite_note-7)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp) nomadic people comprising the western branch of the Cuman-[Kipchak](/wiki/Kipchaks) [confederation](/wiki/Cuman-Kipchak_confederation). After the [Mongol invasion](/wiki/Mongol_invasion_of_Rus') (1237), many sought [asylum](/wiki/Right_of_asylum) in [Hungary](/wiki/Hungary),[[8]](#cite_note-8) as many Cumans had settled in Hungary and Bulgaria before the invasion.[[9]](#cite_note-9)[[10]](#cite_note-10)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp)[[11]](#cite_note-11)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp)

Related to the [Pecheneg](/wiki/Pecheneg),[[12]](#cite_note-12) they inhabited a shifting area north of the [Black Sea](/wiki/Black_Sea) and along the [Volga](/wiki/Volga) River known as [Cumania](/wiki/Cumania), where the Cuman-Kipchaks meddled in the politics of the [Caucasus](/wiki/Caucasus) and the [Khwarezm Empire](/wiki/Khwarezm_Empire).[[10]](#cite_note-10)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp)

Many eventually settled to the west of the Black Sea, influencing the politics of [Kievan Rus'](/wiki/Kievan_Rus'), the [Galicia–Volhynia Principality](/wiki/Kingdom_of_Galicia–Volhynia), the [Golden Horde](/wiki/Golden_Horde) Khanate, the [Second Bulgarian Empire](/wiki/Second_Bulgarian_Empire), [Kingdom of Serbia](/wiki/Kingdom_of_Serbia_(medieval)), the [Kingdom of Hungary](/wiki/Kingdom_of_Hungary), [Moldavia](/wiki/Moldavia), the [Kingdom of Georgia](/wiki/Kingdom_of_Georgia), the [Byzantine Empire](/wiki/Byzantine_Empire), the [Empire of Nicaea](/wiki/Empire_of_Nicaea), the [Latin Empire](/wiki/Latin_Empire) and [Wallachia](/wiki/Wallachia).[[11]](#cite_note-11)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp)

The Cumans also had a pre-eminent role in the [Fourth Crusade](/wiki/Fourth_Crusade) and in the creation of the [Second Bulgarian Empire](/wiki/Second_Bulgarian_Empire).[[10]](#cite_note-10)[[13]](#cite_note-13)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp) Cuman and [Kipchak](/wiki/Kipchaks) tribes joined politically to create the [Cuman-Kipchak confederation](/wiki/Cumania).[[14]](#cite_note-14)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp)

The [Cuman language](/wiki/Cuman_language) is attested in some medieval documents and is the best-known of the early [Turkic languages](/wiki/Turkic_languages).[[7]](#cite_note-7)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp) The [*Codex Cumanicus*](/wiki/Codex_Cumanicus) was a linguistic manual that was written to help Catholic missionaries communicate with the Cuman people.

The Cumans were fierce and formidable nomadic warriors of the [Eurasian](/wiki/Eurasia) [steppe](/wiki/Steppe) who exerted an enduring impact on the medieval Balkans.[[15]](#cite_note-15)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp)[[16]](#cite_note-16) They were numerous, culturally sophisticated and militarily powerful.[[14]](#cite_note-14)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp)

The basic instrument of Cuman political success was military force, which dominated each of the warring Balkan factions. Groups of the Cumans settled and mingled with the local population in regions of the Balkans, and Cuman settlers founded three successive Bulgarian dynasties ([Asenids](/wiki/Asenids), [Terterids](/wiki/Terterids), and [Shishmanids](/wiki/Shishman_dynasty)) and the Wallachian dynasty ([Basarabids](/wiki/Basarabids));[[10]](#cite_note-10)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp)[[11]](#cite_note-11)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp)[[13]](#cite_note-13)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp)[[17]](#cite_note-17)[[18]](#cite_note-18) however, in the cases of the Basarab and Asenid dynasties, medieval documents refer to them as [Vlach](/wiki/Vlach) ([Romanian](/wiki/Romania)) dynasties.[[19]](#cite_note-19) They played an active role in the [Byzantine Empire](/wiki/Byzantine_Empire), the [Kingdom of Hungary](/wiki/Kingdom_of_Hungary), the [Second Bulgarian Empire](/wiki/Second_Bulgarian_Empire) and [Kingdom of Serbia](/wiki/Kingdom_of_Serbia_(medieval)), with Cuman immigrants being integrated into each country's elite.

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## Names & etymology[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=1)]

The original meaning of the [endonym](/wiki/Endonym) Cuman is unknown. It is also often unclear whether a particular name refers to the Cumans alone, or to both them and the [Kipchaks](/wiki/Kipchaks), as the two tribes often lived side by side.[[10]](#cite_note-10)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp) However, in [Turkic languages](/wiki/Turkic_languages) *qu*, *qun*, *qūn*, *quman* or *qoman* means "pale, sallow, cream coloured", "pale yellow", or "yellowish grey".[[20]](#cite_note-20)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp)[[21]](#cite_note-21) While it is normally assumed that the name referred to the Cumans's hair, Imre Baski – a prominent [Turkologist](/wiki/Turkology) – has suggested that it may have other origins, including:

* the color of the Cumans' horses (i.e. [cream](/wiki/Cream_gene) tones are found among Central Asian breeds such as the [Akhal-Teke](/wiki/Akhal-Teke));
* a traditional water vessel, known as a *quman*, or;
* a Turkic word for "force" or "power".[[22]](#cite_note-22)

In East Slavic languages and Polish, they are known as the *Polovtsy*, derived from the Slavic root *\*polvъ* "pale; light yellow; blonde".[[23]](#cite_note-23)[[24]](#cite_note-24)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp) *Polovtsy* or *Polovec* is often said to be derived from the [Old East Slavic](/wiki/Old_East_Slavic) *polovŭ* (половъ) "yellow; pale" by the Russians – all meaning "blond".[[24]](#cite_note-24) The old Ukrainian word *polovtsy* (Пóловці), derived from *polovo* "straw" – means "blond, pale yellow". The western Cumans, or Polovtsy, were also called *Sorochinetses* by the [Rus'](/wiki/Rus'_people), – apparently derived from the Turkic *sary chechle* "yellow-haired". A similar etymology may have been at work in the name of the [Sary people](/wiki/Sary_people), who also migrated westward ahead of the Qun.[[25]](#cite_note-25)[Template:Full citation needed](/wiki/Template:Full_citation_needed) However, according to O. Suleymenov *polovtsy* may come from a Slavic word for "blue-eyed", i.e. the [Serbo-Croatian](/wiki/Serbo-Croatian) *plȃv* (пла̑в) means "blue",[[26]](#cite_note-26) but this word also means "fair, blonde" and is in fact a cognate of the above; cf. [Eastern Slavic](/wiki/East_Slavic_languages) *polovŭ*, Russian *polóvyj* (поло́вый), Ukrainian *polovýj* (полови́й).[[27]](#cite_note-27) An alternative etymology of *Polovtsy* is also possible: the Slavic root *\*pȍlje* "field" (cf. Russian *póle*), which would therefore imply that *Polovtsy* were "men of the field" or "men of the steppe".

In [Germanic languages](/wiki/Germanic_languages), the Cumans were called *Folban*, *Vallani* or *Valwe* – all derivations of old Germanic words for "pale".[[7]](#cite_note-7)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp) In the German account by Adam of Bremen, and in Matthaios of Edessa, the Cumans were referred to as the "Blond Ones".[[23]](#cite_note-23) The [Hungarian](/wiki/Hungarian_language) term for the Cumans is *Kun* (also *Qoun*; *Kunok*), which in Old Hungarian meant "nomad", but was later applied solely to the Cumans.[[28]](#cite_note-28) As stated above, it is unknown whether the name Kipchak referred only to the Kipchaks proper, or to the Cumans as well. The two tribes eventually fused, lived together and probably exchanged weaponry, culture and languages; the Cumans encompassed the western half of the confederation, while the Kipchaks and (presumably) the Kangli/[Kankalis](/wiki/Kankalis) (a ruling clan of the Pechenegs) encompassed the eastern half.[[10]](#cite_note-10)[Template:RpThe](/wiki/Template:Rp) word Kipchak is said to be derived from the Iranian words *kip* "red; blonde" and *cak/chak* "[Scythian](/wiki/Scythian)".[[29]](#cite_note-29) This confederation and their living together may have made it difficult for historians to write exclusively about either nation.

The member clans of the Cumans and/or Kipchaks were: the [Terteroba](/wiki/Terteroba) (*Ter'trobichi*), Etioba/Ietioba, Kay, Itogli, Kochoba (meaning "Ram Clan"), Urosoba, El'Borili, Kangarogli, Andjogli, Durut, Djartan, Karabirkli, Kotan/Hotan, Kulabaogli, Olelric, Altunopa ("Gold Clan"), Toksobychi, Burchevychi, Ulashevichi (*Ulash-oghlu*), Chitieevichi, Elobichi, Kolabichi, Etebichi, Yeltunovychi, Yetebychi, Berish, Olperliuve (*Olperlu*), Emiakovie (*Yemek*), Phalagi, Olberli, [Toksobichi](/wiki/Kuns) or Toqsoba (meaning either "plump leather bottle" or "nine clans"), Borchol or Burdjogli ("Pepper Sons"), Csertan or Curtan ("[pike](/wiki/Pike_(weapon))"), Olas or Ulas ("union; federation"), Kor or Kol ("little; few"), Ilunesuk ("little snake") and Koncsog. The latter seven clans eventually settled in Hungary.[[11]](#cite_note-11)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp)[[20]](#cite_note-20)

## History[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=2)]

### Origins[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=3)]

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The ethnic origins of the Cumanians are uncertain.[[4]](#cite_note-4)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp)[[11]](#cite_note-11)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp)[[30]](#cite_note-30) The Cumans were reported to have had blond hair, fair skin and blue eyes (which set them apart from other groups and later puzzled historians),[[13]](#cite_note-13)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp)[[24]](#cite_note-24)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp)[[31]](#cite_note-31) although their anthropological characteristics suggest that their geographical origin might be in Inner-Asia, South-Siberia, or, as Istvan Vassary postulates, east of the large bend of the [Yellow River](/wiki/Yellow_River) in China.[[9]](#cite_note-9)[[10]](#cite_note-10)[[32]](#cite_note-32)[[33]](#cite_note-33) Robert Wolff states that it is conjectured that ethnically the Cumans may not originally have been Turkic.[[34]](#cite_note-34)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp) The Roman natural philosopher Pliny (who lived in the 1st century AD), in describing the "Gates of Caucasus" ([Derbent](/wiki/Derbent), or [Darial Gorge](/wiki/Darial_Gorge)), mentions "a fortress, the name of which is Cumania, erected for the purpose of preventing the passage of the innumerable tribes that lay beyond".[[35]](#cite_note-35) The [Darial Gorge](/wiki/Darial_Gorge) (also known as the Iberian Gates or the Caucasian Gates) is referred to by the Greek philosopher [Strabo](/wiki/Strabo) as *Porta Caucasica* and *Porta Cumana*.[[36]](#cite_note-36) The writings of al Marwazi (c. 1120) state that the "Qun" people (as the Cumans were called in Hungary) came from the northern Chinese borders – "the land of Qitay" (possibly during a part of a migration from further east). After leaving the lands of the [Khitans](/wiki/Khitan_people) (possibly due to Kitai expansion[[34]](#cite_note-34)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp)), they entered the territory of the Shari/Sari people. Marwazi wrote that the Qun were Nestorian Christians.[[37]](#cite_note-37) It cannot be concluded whether the Cumans conquered the [Kipchaks](/wiki/Kipchaks) or simply represent the western mass of largely Kipchak-Turkic speaking tribes. A "victim" of the Cuman migration to the west was the [Kimek Khanate](/wiki/Kimek_Khanate), which dissolved but then regrouped under Kipchak-Cuman leadership. Due to this, [Kimek](/wiki/Kimek) tribal elements were represented amongst the Cuman-[Kipchaks](/wiki/Kipchaks). The Qun are also mentioned by the Syrian historian Yaqut in *The Dictionary of Countries*, where he mentions that "(the sixth iqlim) begins where the meridian shadow of the equinox is seven, six-tenths, and one-sixth of one-tenth of a foot. Its end exceeds its beginning by only one foot. It begins in the homeland of the Qani, Qun, Khirkhiz, Kimak, at-Tagazgaz, the lands of the Turkomans, Fārāb, and the country of the Khazars."[[11]](#cite_note-11)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp)[[38]](#cite_note-38) The Armenian historian, [Matthew of Edessa](/wiki/Matthew_of_Edessa), also mentioned the Cumans, by the name χartešk (khartes, meaning blond, pale, fair).[[39]](#cite_note-39)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp)[[40]](#cite_note-40) The Cumans entered the grasslands of the southern [Russian steppe](/wiki/Eurasian_Steppe#Russian_Steppe) in the 11th century and continued to assault the [Byzantine Empire](/wiki/Byzantine_Empire), the [Kingdom of Hungary](/wiki/Kingdom_of_Hungary), the [Principality of Pereyaslavl](/wiki/Principality_of_Pereyaslavl) and [Kievan Rus'](/wiki/Kievan_Rus'). The Cumans entry into the area pressed the [Oghuz Turks](/wiki/Oghuz_Turks) to shift west, which in turn caused the Pechenegs to move to the west of the Dnieper River.[[7]](#cite_note-7)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp) Cuman and Rus' attacks contributed to the departure of the Oghuz from the steppes north of the [Black Sea](/wiki/Black_Sea).[[7]](#cite_note-7)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp) The Cumans first entered the Bugeac (Bessarabia) at some point around 1068–1078. They launched a joint expedition with the Pechenegs against [Adrianople](/wiki/Adrianople) in 1078. During that same year the Cumans were also fighting the [Rus'](/wiki/Rus'_people).[[7]](#cite_note-7)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp) The Russian [Primary Chronicle](/wiki/Primary_Chronicle) mentions Yemek Cumans who were active in the region of [Volga Bulgaria](/wiki/Volga_Bulgaria).[[11]](#cite_note-11)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp)

The vast territory of the Cuman-Kipchak realm consisted of loosely connected tribal units that were the dominant military force but were never politically united by a strong central power; the khans acted on their own initiative. The Cuman-Kipchaks never established a state, instead forming a Cuman-Kipchak confederation ([Cumania](/wiki/Cumania)/Desht-i Qipchaq/Zemlja Poloveckaja(Polovcian Land)/Pole Poloveckoe(Polovcian Plain),[[10]](#cite_note-10)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp) which stretched from the [Danube](/wiki/Danube_River) in the west to [Taraz](/wiki/Taraz), [Kazakhstan](/wiki/Kazakhstan) in the east.[[11]](#cite_note-11)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp) This was possibly due to their facing no prolonged threat before the Mongol invasion, and it may have either prolonged their existence or quickened their destruction.[[41]](#cite_note-41) Robert Wolff states that it was discipline and cohesion that permitted the Cuman-Kipchaks to conquer such a vast territory.[[34]](#cite_note-34)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp) al-Idrīsī states that Cumania got its name from the city of Cumania; he wrote, "From the city of Khazaria to the city of Kirait is 25 miles. From there to Cumanie, which has given its name to the Cumans, it is 25 miles; this city is called Black Cumania. From the city of Black Cumania to the city of Tmutorakan (MaTlUqa), which is called White Cumania, it is 50 miles. White Cumania is a large inhabited city...Indeed, in this fifth part of the seventh section there is the northern part of the land of Russia and the northern part of the land of Cumania...In this sixth part there is a description of the land of Inner Cumania and parts of the land of Bulgaria."[[42]](#cite_note-42) The [Golden Horde](/wiki/Golden_Horde) Khanate was also referred to as "Comania" by Armenian chronicler Hethum (Hayton) of Korykos.[[7]](#cite_note-7)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp) The Moroccan traveler, [Ibn Batutta](/wiki/Ibn_Batutta), said of Cumania, "This wilderness is green and grassy with no trees, nor hills, high or low...there is no means of travelling in this desert except in wagons." The Persian historian, [Hamdallah Mustawfi](/wiki/Hamdallah_Mustawfi), wrote that Cumania has a cold climate and that it has excellent pasturage and numerous cattle and horses.[[7]](#cite_note-7)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp) The traveler, [John Mandeville](/wiki/John_Mandeville), wrote that Cumania "is one of the great kingdoms in the world, but it is not all inhabited. For at one of the parts there is so great cold that no man may dwell there; and in another part there is so great heat that no man may endure it...And the principal city of Comania is clept Sarak [Serai], that is one of the three ways for to go into India. But by that way, he may not pass no great multitude of people, but if it be in winter. And that passage men clepe the Derbend. The other way is for to go from the city of Turkestan by Persia, and by that way be many journeys by desert. And the third way is that cometh from Comania and then to go by the Great Sea and by the kingdom of Abchaz...After that, the Comanians that were in servage in Egypt, felt themselves that they were of great power, they chose them a soldan amongst them, the which made him to be clept Melechsalan. And in his time entered into the country of the kings of France Saint Louis, and fought with him; and [the soldan] took him and imprisoned him; and this [soldan] was slain by his own servants. And after, they chose another to be soldan, that they clept Tympieman; and he let deliver Saint Louis out of prison for a certain ransom. And after, one of these Comanians reigned, that hight Cachas, and slew Tympieman, for to be soldan; and made him be clept Melechmenes."[[43]](#cite_note-43) According to the 12th-century Jewish traveler [Petachiah of Regensburg](/wiki/Petachiah_of_Regensburg) "they have no king, only princes and royal families."[[41]](#cite_note-41) Cumans interacted with the [Rus'](/wiki/Rus'_people) principalities, [Bulgaria](/wiki/Bulgaria), [Byzantine Empire](/wiki/Byzantium), and the [Wallachian states](/wiki/Wallachia) in the [Balkans](/wiki/Balkans); with [Armenia](/wiki/Armenia) and [Kingdom of Georgia](/wiki/Kingdom_of_Georgia) (see [Kipchaks in Georgia](/wiki/Kipchaks_in_Georgia)) in the [Caucasus](/wiki/Caucasus); and with the [Khwarezm Empire](/wiki/Khwarazmian_dynasty) in Central Asia. The Cumans-[Kipchaks](/wiki/Kipchaks) constituted an important element and were closely associated with the Khwarazmian royal house, via marital alliances.[[4]](#cite_note-4)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp) The Cumans were also active in commerce with traders from [Central Asia](/wiki/Central_Asia) to [Venice](/wiki/Venice).[[44]](#cite_note-44) The Cumans had a commercial interest in [Crimea](/wiki/Crimea), where they also took tribute from Crimean cities. A major area of commerce was the ancient city of [Sudak](/wiki/Sudak), which was viewed by Ibn al-Air as the "city of the Qifjaq from which (flow) their material possessions. It is on the Khazar Sea. Ships come to it bearing clothes. The Qifjiqs buy from them and sell them slaves. Burtas furs, beaver, squirrels..." Due to their political dominance, the [Cuman language](/wiki/Cuman_language) became the lingua franca of the region. Thus the language was adopted by the [Karaite Jewish](/wiki/Crimean_Karaites) and Crimean Armenian communities (who produced many documents written in Kipchak with the Armenian alphabet[[39]](#cite_note-39)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp)), where it was [preserved](/wiki/Karaim_language) for centuries up to the modern day.[[4]](#cite_note-4)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp)

The Cuman-Kipchaks created a powerful caste of warriors, the [Mamluks](/wiki/Mamluks) and the [Mamluk Sultanate (Cairo)](/wiki/Mamluk_Sultanate_(Cairo)). These Mamluks came from Crimea and were from the Cuman clans of Burchevichi (Mamluk:Burch-oghlu), a part of which also settled in Hungary and were mentioned as the Borchol, Itoba and Toksobichi (Mamluk:Toqsoba).[[45]](#cite_note-45) These three clans were mentioned by Rus' sources, the former two appearing to be part of the "Non Wild" Cumans.[[11]](#cite_note-11)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp) The Mamluks were seen as "true lords", with social status above freeborn Egyptian Muslims.<ref name=GP>[Template:Cite book](/wiki/Template:Cite_book)</ref> The Cuman-Kipchak [Qutub-ud-din Aibak](/wiki/Qutub-ud-din_Aibak) was appointed as governor of a part of the realm of [Muhammad Ghori](/wiki/Muhammad_Ghori). Qutub proclaimed independence after the death of his patron and created the [Delhi Sultanate](/wiki/Delhi_Sultanate);[[46]](#cite_note-46) his line is known as the [Mamluk Dynasty](/wiki/Mamluk_Dynasty_(Delhi)) due to his origin.[[47]](#cite_note-47) The most prominent Cuman Sultan of the Mamluk Sultanate was Sultan [Baibars](/wiki/Baibars), who defeated King [Louis IX of France](/wiki/Louis_IX_of_France) and resisted the Mongol invasion, defeating them at the [Battle of Ain Jalut](/wiki/Battle_of_Ain_Jalut) and the [Battle of Elbistan](/wiki/Battle_of_Elbistan) (by using the feigned retreat tactic); he is considered as one of the greatest medieval Muslim leaders.[[15]](#cite_note-15)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp)[[48]](#cite_note-48) Mamluks in the empire retained a particularly strong sense of Cuman identity, to the degree that the biography of Sultan [Baibars](/wiki/Baibars), as reflected by Ibn Shaddad, focused on his birth and early years in Desht-i-Kipchak ("Steppe of the Kipchaks"/Cumania), as well as enslavement and subsequent travels to Bulgaria and the Near East. The historian Dimitri Korobeinikov relates how Baibars' story sums up the tragic fate of many Cumans after the [Battle of Kalka River](/wiki/Battle_of_Kalka_River) and the [Mongol invasion of Europe](/wiki/Mongol_invasion_of_Europe). Roman Kovalev states that this story can further be seen as a mechanism for the preservation of a collective memory broadly reflecting a sense of Cuman identity in the [Mamluk Sultanate](/wiki/Mamluk_Egypt).[[49]](#cite_note-49) In the latter part of the 1260s the Mamluks were allied with the Golden Horde against the [Ilkhanate](/wiki/Ilkhanate).[[30]](#cite_note-30) The creation of this specific warrior class was described as the "mamluk phenomenon" by [David Ayalon](/wiki/David_Ayalon) and was of great political importance.[[50]](#cite_note-50)

### Battles in Kievan Rus' and the Balkans[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=4)]

[thumb|300px|*The field of*](/wiki/File:Igorsvyat.jpg) [*Igor Svyatoslavich's*](/wiki/Igor_Svyatoslavich) *battle with the* [*Cuman*](/wiki/Cuman)*–*[*Kipchaks*](/wiki/Kipchaks), by [Viktor Vasnetsov](/wiki/Viktor_Vasnetsov)

The Cumans first encountered the [Rus'](/wiki/Rus'_people) in 1055, when they advanced towards the [Rus' Pereyaslavl principality](/wiki/Principality_of_Pereyaslavl), but Prince [Vsevolod I of Kiev](/wiki/Vsevolod_I_of_Kiev) reached an agreement with them thus avoiding a military confrontation. In 1061, however, the Cumans, under the chieftain Sokal, invaded and devastated the Pereyaslavl principality; this began a war that would go on for 175 years.[[7]](#cite_note-7)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp)[[51]](#cite_note-51)[[52]](#cite_note-52) In 1068 at the [Battle of the Alta River](/wiki/Battle_of_the_Alta_River), the Cumans defeated the armies of the three sons of [Yaroslav the Wise](/wiki/Yaroslav_the_Wise), [Sviatoslav II of Kiev](/wiki/Sviatoslav_II_of_Kiev), and [Vsevolod Yaroslavych](/wiki/Vsevolod_Yaroslavych). After the Cuman victory, they repeatedly invaded Kievan Rus', devastating the land and taking captives, who became either slaves or were sold at markets in the south. The most vulnerable regions were the Principality of Pereyaslavl, the [Principality of Novgorod-Seversk](/wiki/Principality_of_Novgorod-Seversk) and the [Principality of Chernigov](/wiki/Principality_of_Chernigov).[[52]](#cite_note-52) The Cumans initially managed to defeat the Great Prince [Vladimir Monomakh](/wiki/Vladimir_Monomakh) of Kievan Rus' in 1093 at the [Battle of the Stugna River](/wiki/Battle_of_the_Stugna_River), but they were defeated later by the combined forces of Russian principalities led by Monomakh and were forced out of the Rus' borders to the Caucasus. In these battles some [Pecheneg](/wiki/Pechenegs) and [Oghuz](/wiki/Oghuz_Turks) groups were liberated from the Cumans and incorporated into the Rus' border-guard system. Khan [Boniak](/wiki/Boniak) launched invasions on Kiev in 1096, 1097, 1105, and 1107. In 1096 Boniak attacked Kiev and burned down the princely palace in Berestove; he also plundered the Kievan Cave Monastery. Boniak was defeated near Lubny in 1107 by the forces of the Kievan Rus' princes.[[53]](#cite_note-53) The Cumans led by Boniak crushed the Hungarian army led by Coloman in 1099 and seized the royal treasury. In 1109 Monomakh launched another raid against the Cumans and captured "1000 tents".[[11]](#cite_note-11)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp) In 1111,1113 and 1116 further raids were launched against the Cumans and resulted in the liberation and incorporation of more Pecheneg and Oghuz tribes.

During this time the Cumans raided the [Byzantine Empire](/wiki/Byzantine_Empire) and [Volga Bulgaria](/wiki/Volga_Bulgaria). Volga Bulgaria was attacked again at a later stage, by Khan Ayepa, father-in-law of prince [Yuri Dolgorukiy](/wiki/Yuri_Dolgorukiy), perhaps at the instigation of the prince. The Volga Bulgars in turn poisoned Ayepa "and the other princes; all of them died."[[11]](#cite_note-11)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp)[[11]](#cite_note-11)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp) Cumans at that time also resettled in the [Kingdom of Georgia](/wiki/Kingdom_of_Georgia) and were Christianized. There they [achieved prominent positions](/wiki/Kipchaks_in_Georgia), helped Georgians to stop the advance of [Seljuk Turks](/wiki/Seljuk_dynasty), and helped make Georgia the most powerful kingdom of the region (they were referred to as naqivchaqari).[[11]](#cite_note-11)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp) After the death of the warlike Monomakh in 1125, Cumans returned to the steppe along the Rus' borders. Fighting resumed in 1128; Rus' sources mention that Sevinch, son of Khan [Boniak](/wiki/Boniak), expressed the desire to plant his sword "in the Golden gate of Kiev", as his father had done before him.[[11]](#cite_note-11)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp)

[thumb|](/wiki/File:Biliwar.jpg)[Ivan Bilibin's](/wiki/Ivan_Bilibin) illustration to the [*The Tale of Igor's Campaign*](/wiki/The_Tale_of_Igor's_Campaign) shows the Cumans fighting against the Rus'.

On 20 March 1155 Prince [Gleb Yuryevich](/wiki/Gleb_of_Kiev) took Kiev with the help of a Cuman army under the Cuman prince Chemgura.[[54]](#cite_note-54) By 1160 Cuman raids into Rus' had become an annual event. These attacks put pressure on Rus' and affected trade routes to the Black Sea and Constantinople, in turn leading Rus' to again attempt action. Offenses were halted during 1166–1169, when Grand prince [Andrey Bogolyubsky](/wiki/Andrey_Bogolyubsky), son of Khan Ayepa's daughter, took control of Kiev in 1169 and installed Gleb as his puppet. Gleb brought in "Wild" Cumans as well as Oghuz and [Berendei](/wiki/Berendei) units. Later, the princes of the Principality of Chernigov attempted to use Khan Konchek's army against Kievan Rus' and Suzdal. This Chernigov-Cuman alliance suffered a disastrous defeat in 1180; Elrut, Konchek's brother died in battle. In 1177 a Cuman army that was allied with Ryazan sacked six cities that belonged to the Berendei and [Torkil](/wiki/Torkil). In 1183 the Rus' defeated a large Cuman army and cuptured Khan Kobiak (Kobek) as well as his sons and other notables.

Subsequently Khan Konchek concluded negotiations. Like his son Khan [Köten](/wiki/Köten), preceding the Mongol invasion, Khan Konchek was successful in creating a more cohesive force out of the many Cuman groups – he united the western and eastern Cumans-Kipchak tribes. Khan Konchek also changed the old Cuman system of government whereby rulership went to the most senior tribal leader; he instead passed it on to his son Koten.[[14]](#cite_note-14)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp) [Igor Svyatoslavich](/wiki/Igor_Svyatoslavich), prince of the Principality of Novgorod-Seversk, attacked the Cumans in the vicinity of the Kayala river in 1185 but was defeated; this battle was immortalized in the Rus' [epic poem](/wiki/Epic_poem), [The Tale of Igor's Campaign](/wiki/The_Tale_of_Igor's_Campaign), and [Alexander Borodin's](/wiki/Alexander_Borodin) [opera](/wiki/Opera), [*Prince Igor*](/wiki/Prince_Igor). The dynamic pattern of attacks and counterattacks between the Rus' and the Cumans indicates that both rarely, if ever, were able to attain the unity needed to deal a fatal blow. The Cuman attacks on the Rus' often had [Caucasian](/wiki/Caucasus) and [Danubian](/wiki/Danube) European implications.[[11]](#cite_note-11)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp)

In the Balkans, the Cumans were in contact with all the statal entities. They fought with the Kingdom of Hungary, allied with the [Bulgarians](/wiki/Bulgarians) of the [Second Bulgarian Empire](/wiki/Second_Bulgarian_Empire) (they were the empire's most effective military component)[[24]](#cite_note-24)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp) and with the [Vlachs](/wiki/Vlachs) against the [Byzantine Empire](/wiki/Byzantine_Empire); they were also involved in the politics of the fresh Vlach states. A variant of the oldest Turkic chronicle, Oghuzname (The Oghuz Khan's Tale), mentions the Cumans fighting the Magyars, Rus', Romanians (Ulak), and [Bashkirs](/wiki/Bashkirs), who had refused to submit to their authority.[[7]](#cite_note-7)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp) A notable Cuman leader in Europe, [Thocomer](/wiki/Thocomerius) (Toq-tämir, meaning 'hardened steel') was possibly the first to unite the Romanian (Vlach) states from the west and the east of the [Olt River](/wiki/Olt_River). Thocomer's son [Basarab I of Wallachia](/wiki/Basarab_I_of_Wallachia) ("Father king"[[17]](#cite_note-17) in the [Cuman language](/wiki/Cuman_language)) is considered the founder and first ruler of the united and independent kingdom of [Wallachia](/wiki/Wallachia).[[55]](#cite_note-55) This interpretation corresponds with the general view of the situation of [Romania in the 11th century](/wiki/Romania_in_the_Middle_Ages), with the natives living in collections of village communities united in small confederacies, and with powerful chiefs competing to create small kingdoms. Some of these Romanian chiefs paid tribute to the militarily dominant nomadic tribes that surrounded them.

[thumb|left|240px|Hungarian King](/wiki/File:Ladislaus_(left)_Cuman_(right).jpg) [Ladislaus I of Hungary](/wiki/Ladislaus_I_of_Hungary) (left) fighting a Cuman warrior (right), from the Székelyderzs (Dârjiu) Unitarian Church, Romania.

In 1089, [Ladislaus I of Hungary](/wiki/Ladislaus_I_of_Hungary) defeated the Cumans after they attacked the Kingdom of Hungary. In 1091, the [Pechenegs](/wiki/Pechenegs), a [semi-nomadic](/wiki/Semi-nomadic) Turkic people of the prairies of southwestern [Eurasia](/wiki/Eurasia), were decisively defeated as an independent force at the [Battle of Levounion](/wiki/Battle_of_Levounion) by the combined forces of a Byzantine army under Emperor [Alexios I Komnenos](/wiki/Alexios_I_Komnenos) and a Cuman army under Togortok/Tugorkan and Boniak. Attacked again in 1094 by the Cumans, many Pechenegs were again slain. Some of the Pechenegs fled to Hungary, as the Cumans themselves would do a few decades later. In 1091/1092 the Cumans, under Kopulch, raided Transylvania and Hungary, moving to Bihor and getting as far as the [Tisza](/wiki/Tisza_River) and [Timiș](/wiki/Timiș_River) rivers. Loaded with goods and prisoners they then split into three groups, after which they were attacked and defeated by King Ladislaus I.

In 1092 the Cumans resumed their raids against the Rus' and also attacked the [Kingdom of Poland](/wiki/Kingdom_of_Poland_(1025–1385)).[[7]](#cite_note-7)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp) In 1094/1095 the Cumans, led by Tugorkan, in support of the exiled Byzantine pretender [Constantine Diogenes](/wiki/Constantine_Diogenes_(pretender)) (as a pretext to plundering), invaded the Balkans and conquered the Byzantine province of [Paristrion](/wiki/Paristrion). The Cumans then advanced all the way to [Adrianople](/wiki/Adrianople) and [Anchialos](/wiki/Pomorie) but couldn't conquer them. In the following years, when knights of the [First Crusade](/wiki/First_Crusade) were passing through the empire, Byzantium offered the Cumans prestige titles and gifts in order to appease them; subsequently good relations ensued.[[7]](#cite_note-7)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp) In 1097/1099, [Sviatopolk II of Kiev](/wiki/Sviatopolk_II_of_Kiev) requested help from the Cumans against [Coloman, King of Hungary](/wiki/Coloman,_King_of_Hungary), who was involved in a feud with [Volodar of Peremyshl](/wiki/Volodar_of_Peremyshl), prince of [Przemyśl](/wiki/Przemyśl). King Coloman and his army crossed the Carpathian Mountain and laid siege on Przemyśl, which prompted David Igorevich, an ally of Volodar Rostislavich, to convince the Cumans, under Khan Boniak and Altunopa, to attack the Hungarians.[[56]](#cite_note-56) The Hungarian army was soundly crushed by the Cumans; the *Illuminated Chronicle* mentions that "rarely did Hungarians suffer such slaughter as in this battle."[[7]](#cite_note-7)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp)[[57]](#cite_note-57) In 1104 the Cumans were allied with Prince Volodar. In 1106, the Cumans advanced into the [Principality of Volhynia](/wiki/Principality_of_Volhynia), but were repelled by [Sviatopolk II](/wiki/Sviatopolk_II_of_Kiev). In 1114 the Cumans launched an invasion, from the western Romanian Plain, into the Byzantine Balkans once more. This was followed up by another incursion in 1123/1124. In 1135 the Cumans again invaded the Kingdom of Poland. During the second and third crusades, in 1147 and 1189, crusaders were attacked by Cumans, who were allied to the [Asen dynasty](/wiki/Asen_dynasty) of the Second Bulgarian Empire, or who were in Byzantine service.[[7]](#cite_note-7)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp)

[thumb|Central, Southern and Eastern Europe, 1190](/wiki/File:Europe_mediterranean_1190_cropped.jpg)

In alliance with the [Bulgarians](/wiki/Bulgarians) and [Vlachs](/wiki/Vlachs),[[58]](#cite_note-58)[[59]](#cite_note-59) the Cumans are believed to have played a significant role in the [Vlach-Bulgar Rebellion](/wiki/Vlach-Bulgar_Rebellion) led by brothers Asen and Peter of [Tarnovo](/wiki/Veliko_Tarnovo), resulting in victory over Byzantium and the restoration of Bulgaria's independence in 1185.[[60]](#cite_note-60) Istvan Vassary states that without the active participation of the Cumans, the Vlakho-Bulgarian rebels could never have gained the upper hand over the Byzantines, and ultimately without the military support of the Cumans, the process of Bulgarian restoration could never have been realised.[[10]](#cite_note-10)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp)[[31]](#cite_note-31) The Cuman participation in the creation of the Second Bulgarian Empire in 1185 and thereafter brought about basic changes in the political and ethnic sphere of Bulgaria and the Balkans.[[10]](#cite_note-10)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp) The Cumans were allies in the [Bulgarian-Latin Wars](/wiki/Bulgarian-Latin_Wars) with emperor [Kaloyan of Bulgaria](/wiki/Kaloyan_of_Bulgaria), who was descended from the Cumans. In 1205, at the [Battle of Adrianople (1205)](/wiki/Battle_of_Adrianople_(1205)), 14,000 Cuman light cavalry contributed to Kaloyan's crushing victory over the [Latin Crusaders](/wiki/Fourth_Crusade).[[31]](#cite_note-31) Cuman troops continued to be hired throughout the 13th and 14th century by both the Bulgarians and Byzantines.[[18]](#cite_note-18) The Cumans who remained east and south of the [Carpathian Mountains](/wiki/Carpathian_Mountains) established a county named Cumania, which was a strong military base in an area consisting of parts of [Moldavia](/wiki/Moldavia) and [Wallachia](/wiki/Wallachia).[[13]](#cite_note-13) The Hungarian kings claimed supremacy over Cumania – among the nine titles of the Hungarian kings of the [Árpád](/wiki/Árpád_dynasty) and [Anjou](/wiki/Capetian_House_of_Anjou) dynasties were *rex Cumaniae* – but few, if any, Cuman leaders recognized their overlordship, pointing to the fact that *rex Cumaniae* was an allegory title since the kings never fulfilled that role.[[13]](#cite_note-13)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp) The Cuman influence in Wallachia and Moldavia was very strong, according to some historians who claim that the earliest Wallachian rulers bore Cuman names (e.g. Tihomir and Bassarab).[[61]](#cite_note-61) The Cumans played a crucial role in the formation of [Wallachia](/wiki/Wallachia) at the end of the 14th century; many of the first Romanian nobleman were of Cuman descent.[[18]](#cite_note-18) Transylvania enjoyed Cuman protection against Hungarian incursions into the Carpathians.[[13]](#cite_note-13) The toponymy of the most densely populated regions of Romanian settlement shows strong evidence of Cuman traces and placenames.[[61]](#cite_note-61) With a lack of convincing archaeological evidence of a Cuman civilisation, it appears the Cumans were a minority in the local population, but they made up part of the ruling élite in Wallachia.

[Basarab I](/wiki/Basarab_I), son of the Wallachian prince [Thocomerius](/wiki/Thocomerius) of [Wallachia](/wiki/Wallachia), obtained independence from Hungary at the beginning of the 14th century. The Basarab dynasty was founded by the Cumans,[[14]](#cite_note-14)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp) the name meaning "Father King". It is generally believed by historians (Bulgarian and Hungarian) that the Bulgarian mediaеval dynasties [Asen](/wiki/Asen_dynasty), [Shishman](/wiki/Shishman_dynasty) and [Terter](/wiki/Terter) were Cumanian. Romanian historians suggest that old chronicles indicated a Romanian origin of Asen family. Leading figures of the [Terteroba](/wiki/Terteroba) clan as well as relatives of Khan Koten settled in Bulgaria.[[10]](#cite_note-10)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp)[[31]](#cite_note-31)

### Mongol invasions[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=5)]

[Template:See also](/wiki/Template:See_also) [thumb|Cuman statue, 12th century,](/wiki/File:Baba_010.jpg) [Luhansk](/wiki/Luhansk) [thumb|Eurasia before the Mongol invasions](/wiki/File:Premongol.png)

Like most other peoples of medieval [Eastern Europe](/wiki/Eastern_Europe), the Cumans put up a resistance against the relentlessly advancing [Mongols](/wiki/Mongols) led by Jebe and Subutai. The Mongols crossed the Caucasus mountains in pursuit of Muhammad II, the shah of the [Khwarezmid Empire](/wiki/Khwarezmid_Empire), and met and defeated the Cumans in Subcaucasia in 1220. The Cuman [khans](/wiki/Khan_(title)) Danylo Kobiakovych and Yurii Konchakovych died in battle, while the other Cumans, commanded by Khan [Köten](/wiki/Köten), managed to get aid from the Rus' princes.[[52]](#cite_note-52) As the Mongols were approaching Russia, Khan Köten fled to the court of his son-in-law, Prince Mstislav the Bold of Galich, where he gave "numerous presents: horses, camels, buffaloes and girls. And he presented these gifts to them, and said the following, 'Today the Mongols took away our land and tomorrow they will come and take away yours'." The Cumans were ignored for almost a year, however, as the Rus' had suffered from their raids for decades. But when news reached Kiev that the Mongols were marching along the Dniester River, the Rus' responded. Mstislav of Galich then arranged a council of war in Kiev, which was attended by Mstislav Romanovich, Prince Yuri II of Vladimir-Suzdal and Mstislav Svyatoslavich of Chernigov. The princes promised support to Khan Koten's Cumans and an alliance between the Rus' and Cumans was formed. It was decided that the Rus' and Cumans would move east to seek and destroy any Mongols they found. The Rus' princes then began mustering their armies and moved towards the rendezvous point. The army of the alliance of the Rus' and Cumans numbered around 80,000. When the alliance reached Pereyaslavl, they were met by a Mongol envoy that tried to persuade them not to fight. This as well as a second attempt by the Mongols failed; the alliance then crossed the Dnieper River and marched eastward for nine days pursuing a small Mongol contingent, unknowingly being led by a false retreat. The [battle](/wiki/Battle_of_Kalka_River) took place near the Kalka River in 1223. Due to confusion and mistakes, the Rus' and Cumans were defeated. In the chaos the Cumans managed to retreat, but the Rus' failed to regroup and were crushed.[[62]](#cite_note-62)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp) The Cumans were allied at Kalka River with Wallach warriors named Brodnics, led by Ploscanea.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed) Brodnics' territory was in the lower parts of the Prut river in modern Romania and Moldova. During the second Mongol invasion of Eastern Europe in 1237–1240 the Cumans were defeated again; at this time groups of Cumans went to live with the Volga Bulgars, who had not been attacked yet.[[62]](#cite_note-62)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp)

Istvan Vassary states that after the Mongol conquest, "A large-scale westward migration of the Cumans began." Certain Cumans also moved to Anatolia, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan.[[39]](#cite_note-39)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp) In the summer of 1237 the first wave of this Cuman exodus appeared in Bulgaria. The Cumans crossed the Danube, and this time Tsar [Ivan Asen II](/wiki/Ivan_Asen_II) could not tame them, as he had often been able to do earlier; the only possibility left for him was to let them march through Bulgaria in a southerly direction. They proceeded through Thrace as far as Hadrianoupolis and Didymotoichon, plundering and pillaging the towns and the countryside, just as before. The whole of Thrace became, as Akropolites put it, a "Scythian desert."[[10]](#cite_note-10)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp)

A direct attack on [Cumania](/wiki/Cumania) came only in 1238–1239, and encountered serious resistance by various Cuman khans.[[63]](#cite_note-63) The final blow came in 1241, when Cuman control over the [Pontic steppes](/wiki/Pontic-Caspian_steppe) ended and the Cuman-Kipchak confedration ceased to exist as a political entity, with the remaining Cuman tribes being dispersed, either becoming subjects and mixing with their Mongol conquerors, as part of what was to be known as the Golden Horde (Kipchak Khanate) and Nogai Horde, or fleeing to the west, to the Byzantine Empire, the Second Bulgarian Empire, and the [Kingdom of Hungary](/wiki/Kingdom_of_Hungary), where they integrated into the elite and became kings and nobles with many privileges. Other Cuman captives were sent to Egypt to be sold as slaves, who would go on to become [Mamluks](/wiki/Mamluk), who would attain the rank of Sultan or hold regional power as [emirs](/wiki/Emir) or beys. Some of these Mamluks would fight the Mongols again, defeating them at the [Battle of Ain Jalut](/wiki/Battle_of_Ain_Jalut) and the [Battle of Elbistan](/wiki/Battle_of_Elbistan).[[62]](#cite_note-62)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp)[[64]](#cite_note-64)

### Settlement on the Hungarian plain[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=6)]

[thumb|Kingdom of Hungary, 13th century](/wiki/File:Hungary_13th_cent.png)

King [Andrew II of Hungary](/wiki/Andrew_II_of_Hungary) granted the [Burzenland](/wiki/Burzenland) region to the [Teutonic Knights](/wiki/Teutonic_Knights) in 1211, with the purpose of ensuring security of the southeastern borders of his kingdom against the Cumans. The Teutonic Knights campaigned against the Cumans, on behalf of King Andrew, during the years of 1221–1225.[[65]](#cite_note-65)[[66]](#cite_note-66) However, the Teutonic Knights failed to defeat the Cumans and began to establish a country independent of the King of Hungary. In 1238, after Mongol attacks on Cumania, King [Béla IV of Hungary](/wiki/Béla_IV_of_Hungary) offered refuge to the remainder of the Cuman people under their leader Khan Köten, who in turn vowed to convert his 40,000 families to Christianity. King Béla hoped to use the new subjects as auxiliary troops against the Mongols, who were already threatening Hungary. The Cumans were joined by the Iranian [Jasz people](/wiki/Jasz_people), who had been living with the Cumans.[[20]](#cite_note-20)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp) Batu Khan of the Mongols then ordered Bela to stop giving refuge to the Cumans and made a particular point that if attacked the Cumans could easily run away, for they were skilled horseman, but not so for the Hungarians, who were a sedentary nation and had no such luxury. Bela rejected this ultimatum.

Around December 1240 news came that the Mongols were advancing towards Hungary. King Bela then installed front line defenses at the Carpathian Mountains, after which he returned to Buda and called a council of war and ordered unity against the Mongols. The opposite happened, however, as many of the barons were hostile towards the Cumans. The Hungarian barons noted that there were Cumans in the Mongol armies, but they didn't realize that this was because they were conscripted into it and had no say in the matter. In particular the barons didn't trust Koten, despite the fact that the Mongols had attacked his people for nearly 20 years. This chaos pushed Bela into a corner; feeling he needed to show his strength and keep the rebellious barons onside, he ordered Koten to be placed under house arrest. This did not placate the barons and had an opposite effect of erroneously seeming to admit that the King harboured doubts about Koten, too. This angered the Cumans, who were far from happy about the actions taken against them, and who had done nothing to invite such actions and hated the Mongols. News arrived on 10 March that the Mongols had attacked the Hungarian defenses at the Carpathian passes. This prompted Bela to send a letter to Duke Frederick of Austria asking for help. Frederick had previously wanted Bela's throne, but Bela responded by amassing a vast army and marching to the gates of Vienna, which forced Frederick to step back. On March 14 news had arrived that the Carpathian defense forces were defeated by the Mongols. Ironically, given the suspicion of the Cumans, they were the only ones who seemed willing to fight the Mongols, the memory of the fate that had befallen them on the steppes still being fresh in their minds. At the time the Hungarian forces were cowered behind the walls of [Sibiu](/wiki/Sibiu). By this time Bela had lost control of his army and many towns were destroyed. Soon thereafter Frederick arrived, and, wishing to harm the country's defense (in revenge to Bela), he stirred up further feelings against the Cumans.

After crushing defeats and facing complete collapse, the Hungarians engaged in a suicidal betrayal of the Cumans, the people that had done the most in repelling the Mongols. Some of the barons went to Koten's house with the intent of killing him as scapegoat or handing him over to the Mongols. But Koten had already realised their intention, so he had killed himself and his wives. The barons then cut off their heads and threw them onto the streets outside the house in an act of brutality and stupidity that had dire consequences. When news of this outrage reached the Cuman camp there was an eruption of "Vesuvian intensity." In revenge for this undeserved victimization they slaughtered a vast number of Hungarians.[[14]](#cite_note-14)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp)[[15]](#cite_note-15)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp) The enraged Cumans then left for the Balkans and the Second Bulgarian Empire, going on a rampage of destruction through Hungary "equal to that which Europe had not experienced since the incursions of the Mongols."[[13]](#cite_note-13)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp)[[67]](#cite_note-67) With this departure of its only ally and most efficient and reliable military force,[[24]](#cite_note-24)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp)[[68]](#cite_note-68) Hungary was now further weakened to attack, and a month later it was destroyed by the Mongols.[[13]](#cite_note-13)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp)[[39]](#cite_note-39)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp) After the invasion King Béla IV, now penniless and humiliated after the confiscation of his treasury and loss of three of his border areas, begged the powerful Cumans to return to Hungary and help rebuild the country.[[13]](#cite_note-13) In return for their military service, Béla invited the Cumans to settle in areas of the Great Plain between the Danube and the Theiss Rivers; this region had become almost uninhabited after the Mongol raids of 1241–1242.[[69]](#cite_note-69) The Cuman tribes subsequently settled throughout the [Great Hungarian Plain](/wiki/Great_Hungarian_Plain), creating two regions incorporating the name [Cumania](/wiki/Cumania) ([*Kunság*](/wiki/Kunság) in Hungarian): [Greater Cumania](/wiki/Greater_Cumania) (*Nagykunság*) and [Little Cumania](/wiki/Little_Cumania) (*Kiskunság*). Six of these tribes were the Borchol (Borscol), who settled in county of Temes (the Borchol clan was also active around Rus'; they were also a tribe of the Golden Horde mentioned as Burcoylu); Csertan, who settled in [Little Cumania](/wiki/Little_Cumania); Olas, who settled in [Greater Cumania](/wiki/Greater_Cumania); Iloncsuk, who settled in Little Cumania; Kor, who settled in the county of Csanad and the sixth being, possibly, Koncsog[[20]](#cite_note-20)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp)[[39]](#cite_note-39)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp)[[69]](#cite_note-69) [thumb|left|Historical coat of arms of](/wiki/File:CumaniaCoA.png) [Kunság](/wiki/Kunság), where Cumans in Hungary settled, divided into [Little Cumania](/wiki/Little_Cumania) and [Greater Cumania](/wiki/Greater_Cumania)

As the Cumans came into the kingdom the Hungarian nobility suspected that the king intended to use the Cumans to strengthen his royal power at their expense.[[70]](#cite_note-70)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp) During the following centuries the Cumans in Hungary were granted rights and privileges, the extent of which depended on the prevailing political situation. Some of these rights survived until the end of the 19th century, although the Cumans had long since assimilated with Hungarians. The Cumans were different in every way to the local population of Hungary – their appearance, attire, and hairstyle set them apart. In 1270 [Elizabeth the Cuman](/wiki/Elizabeth_the_Cuman), the daughter of a Cuman chieftain Seyhan,[[10]](#cite_note-10)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp)[[71]](#cite_note-71)[[72]](#cite_note-72) became queen of Hungary. Elizabeth ruled during the minority of her son (future king [Ladislaus IV of Hungary](/wiki/Ladislaus_IV_of_Hungary)) in the years of 1272–1277. A struggle took place between her and the noble opposition, which led to her imprisonment by the rebels; but supporters freed her in 1274.[[73]](#cite_note-73) During her reign, gifts of precious clothes, land, and other objects were given to the Cumans with the intent to ensure their continued support, and in particular during the civil war between King Béla IV and [Stephen V of Hungary](/wiki/Stephen_V_of_Hungary), when both sides tried to gain Cuman support. During this conflict, in 1264, Béla sent Cuman troops commanded by the chieftain Menk to fight his son Stephen.[[70]](#cite_note-70)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp)[[74]](#cite_note-74)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp) Elizabeth married Stephen V; they were parents of six children. Their son, Ladislaus IV became the king of Hungary while her other son, Andrew of Hungary, became Duke of [Slavonia](/wiki/Slavonia). By 1262, Stephen V had taken the title of 'Dominus Cumanorum' and became the Cumans' highest judge. After his enthronement, the Cumans came directly under the power of the king of Hungary and the title of 'Dominus Cumanorum' (judge of the Cumans) had passed to the count palatine, who was the highest official after the king. The Cumans had their own representatives and were exempt from the jurisdiction of county officials.[[70]](#cite_note-70)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp)

[thumb|Modern Cuman horseman swinging balta axt on horseback. First World Meeting of Cumanians 2009 - Nagykunság](/wiki/File:Cuman_warrior.jpg)

By the 15th century, the Cumans were permanently settled in Hungary, in villages whose structure corresponded to that of the local population, and they were Christianized. The Cumans did not always ally with the Hungarian kings – they assassinated Ladislaus IV; however, other sources suggest that certain Hungarian barons had a role in his murder, thus Ladislaus fell victim to his political enemies.[[74]](#cite_note-74)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp) The royal and ecclesiastical authorities incorporated, rather than excluded, the Cumans. The Cumans served as light cavalry in the royal army, an obligation since they were granted asylum. Being very fierce and capable warriors (as noted by Istvan Vassary), they had an important role in the royal army. The king led them in numerous expeditions against neighbouring countries; most notably they played an important part in the battle between Rudolf of Habsburg and Ottokar II of Bohemia in 1278 – King Ladislaus IV and the Cumans (which numbered 16,000)[[39]](#cite_note-39)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp) were on Rudolf's side.

Hungarian kings relied on the Cumans to counterbalance the growing independent power of the nobility[[70]](#cite_note-70)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp) Royal policy towards the Cumans was determined by their military and political importance. The Hungarian kings continuously hoped to use Cuman military support, the main reason for the invitation to settle and continued royal favors to them. The kings' main aim was to secure Cuman loyalty by various means, including intermarriage between the Cumans and the Hungarian royal family.[[70]](#cite_note-70)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp) Ladislaus IV "the Cuman" (whose mother was Queen Elizabeth the Cuman) was particularly fond of the Cumans and abandoned Hungarian culture and dress for Cuman culture, dress, and hairstyle (he lived with his Cuman entourage and concubines, who were Küpçeç, Mandola and Ayduva[[39]](#cite_note-39)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp)).[[75]](#cite_note-75) There were clashes between the Hungarians and Cumans in 1280 and 1282. The first involved the king convincing the Cumans not to leave the country, yet a small group still moved to Wallachia. The second was a battle between Cuman rebels and the king's forces.[[10]](#cite_note-10)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp) The Cumans initially lived in felt yurts, but as time went by they gradually gave up their nomadic way of life.[[39]](#cite_note-39)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp) The head of Cuman clans served the dual role of a military leader and a judge. The Cumans, having their own jurisdiction, were exempt from Hungarian jurisdiction and appealed to the king only in cases of unsettled disagreements. The Cumans paid 3000 gold bullions a year to the king, as well as other products and animals (since King Béla IV). They had other privileges of self jurisdiction, with their own judges, magistrates and priests and not paying port and custom dues. Cuman villages didn't have landlords and thus no manors were established; this meant that the people of these villages bought off statute labour. The royal guard of the Hungarian kings were Cumans, called *nyoger*. From the 16th century onwards, the Cumans between the Danube and Tisza rivers were referred to as *Kiskun*, while the Cumans east of the Tisza river were referred to as *nagykun*.[[39]](#cite_note-39)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp) The majority of Cumans were exterminated during the [Great Turkish War](/wiki/Great_Turkish_War)[[76]](#cite_note-76) The Cumanians' settlements were destroyed during the Turkish wars in the 16th and 17th centuries; more Cumans than Hungarians were killed.[[39]](#cite_note-39)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp)[[77]](#cite_note-77) Around 1702, Cuman and Jasz privileges were lost. The court sold all three districts to the Teutonic Knights, though the lordship of these three regions was returned to Hungary. In 1734 [Karcag](/wiki/Karcag) became a market town, due to the permission to organise fairs. During this time, it had bought off its borders as its own property for 43,200 Rhenish florins. On May 6, 1745, due to the cooperation between the Cumans and Jasz people, as well as their material strength of their communities, they were able to officially buy off their freedom by paying off more than 500,000 Rhenish florins and by arming and sending to camp 1000 cavalry.[[78]](#cite_note-78) At the beginning of the 18th century the Cumanian territories were resettled by Hungarian-speaking descendants of the Cumans.[[79]](#cite_note-79) In the middle of the 18th century they got their status by becoming free farmers and no longer serfs.[[9]](#cite_note-9)[[80]](#cite_note-80) Here, the Cumans maintained their autonomy, language, and some ethnic customs well into the [modern era](/wiki/Modern_era). According to Pálóczi's estimation, originally 70–80,000 Cumans settled in Hungary. Other estimations are 180–200,000[[39]](#cite_note-39)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp)[[81]](#cite_note-81)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp)

### Cuman involvement in Serbia[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=7)]

Cuman involvement in Serbia first occurred as a result of marital ties between Serbia and Hungary. King Stephen V of Hungary gave his daughter, Catherine (whose mother was Queen Elizabeth the Cuman, daughter of the Cuman chieftain Seyhan), in marriage to [Stefan Dragutin](/wiki/Stefan_Dragutin), son of King [Stefan Uroš I](/wiki/Stefan_Uroš_I) of Serbia. King Uroš had promised, both his son and King Stephen, that he would make Dragutin king during his own lifetime; but he later declined this. Dragutin, in disappointment, requested aid from King Stephen, who said he would lend his Hungarian and Cuman troops. Subsequently, Dragutin set out with his troops and marched to his father. King Uroš had declined once more, and in 1276 Dragutin clashed with his father's army in [Gacko](/wiki/Gacko), winning the battle. Afterwards, Dragutin took the throne and became king of Serbia. After King Stephen's death, his son, Ladislaus IV the Cuman, continued to support Dragutin, his brother-in-law. From 1270 onwards Cuman mercenaries and auxiliaries were present on both sides of the warring factions, sometimes ignoring the orders of the party they were fighting for, instead acting on their own and looting the countryside. The Cumans had also burned down Zica, the former see of the archbishopric of the Serbian Church.[[10]](#cite_note-10)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp)

By 1272, the region of [Braničevo](/wiki/Braničevo_(region)) in Serbia had become a Hungarian banate, but soon afterwards, its rulers, [Kudelin and Darman](/wiki/Darman_and_Kudelin) succeeded in making it an independent state. Kudelin and Darman were either Cuman warriors in [Bugarian service](/wiki/Second_Bulgarian_Empire) or Bulgarian nobles of Cuman origin. This move to independence had angered Ladislaus IV as well as Dragutin, who wanted to crush the rebellion. Darman and Kudelin were supported by the Tatars of the [Golden Horde](/wiki/Golden_Horde) (Kipchak Khanate) against the Hungarians and Serbs. Subsequently Dragutin attacked the brothers but failed to defeat them. After this attack the brothers hired Cuman and Tatar mercenaries. Dragutin in turn went to his brother, [King Milutin](/wiki/Stefan_Milutin) for help. Dragutin battled the brothers again, this time with King Milutin's help as well as support from King Ladislaus IV (Cuman troops), and defeated them. After this King Ladislaus continued negotiations with Darman and Kudelin, but this had failed so he sent Transylvanian and Cuman troops against them. The Cumans had fought on both the Bulgarian and Hungarian-Serbian sides.[[10]](#cite_note-10)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp)

The Cumans were also involved with the semi-independent Bulgarian [Tsardom of Vidin](/wiki/Tsardom_of_Vidin) between 1290–1300, which had become a target of Serbian expansion. In 1280 the Cuman noble, [Shishman](/wiki/Shishman_of_Vidin), became ruler of Vidin. He was perhaps granted the position of despot of Vidin soon after the accession of another Bulgarian noble of Cuman origin, Tsar [George Terter I](/wiki/George_Terter_I) (r. 1280–1292), to the Bulgarian throne in 1280. Shishman was either a close relative or a brother of George Terter I.[[82]](#cite_note-82) Shishman may have established his authority over the Vidin region as early as the 1270s, after the death of the previous ruler of that area, Jacob Svetoslav.[[83]](#cite_note-83) Danilo, a Serbian archbishop, reported, "At that time in the land of the Bulgars a prince called Shishman emerged. He lived in the town of Vidin, and obtained the adjacent countries and much of the Bulgarian land." Some years after, Shishman invaded Serbia and got as far as Hvostno. After failing to capture Zdrelo he returned to Vidin. King Milutin then attacked and devastated Vidin. Subsequent to this Milutin replaced him on his throne on the basis that he would become Shishman's ally. The alliance was strengthened by Shishman marrying the daughter of the Serbian grand zupan Dragos. Further security came about when Milutin later gave his daughter Anna as a wife to Shishman's son Michael, who in 1323 became Tsar of Bulgaria.[[10]](#cite_note-10)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp)

### Golden Horde and Byzantine mercenaries[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=8)]

The Cumans who remained scattered in the prairie of what is now southwest Russia joined the Mongol [Golden Horde](/wiki/Golden_Horde) Khanate, and their descendants became assimilated with local populations including the Mongols ([Tatars](/wiki/Tatars)). The cultural heritage of those Cuman-Kipchaks who remained was transferred to the Mongols, whose élite adopted many of the traits, customs, and language of the Cumans and Kipchaks; the Cumans, Kipchaks, and Mongols finally became assimilated through intermarriage and became the Golden Horde. Those Cumans, with the Turko-Mongols, adopted Islam in the second half of the 13th and the first half of the 14th century.[[52]](#cite_note-52) In 1071, Cumans participated in the [Battle of Manzikert](/wiki/Battle_of_Manzikert) as mercenaries in the Byzantine army against the [Seljuks](/wiki/Seljuks). Emperor Romanus had sent the Cumans and Franks to secure the fortress of [Ahlat](/wiki/Ahlat) on the shore of [Lake Van](/wiki/Lake_Van). The Cumans, who didn't receive their pay, later defected to the Seljuks.[[84]](#cite_note-84) In 1086 Cumans devastated Byzantine settlemennts in the Balkans. Later the Cumans joined the Pechenegs and the former Hungarian king, Salomon, in plundering the Byzantine Balkan provinces. Subsequent to this, the Cumans gave aid to Tatos, the chief of Distra. In 1091 there was a disagreement in plunder shares between the Cumans and Pechenegs, which resulted in a breach between the two peoples; this contributed to the Cumans (led by Togortok/Tugorkan and Boniak, who had repeatedly raided Kievan Rus') joining [Alexios I Komnenos](/wiki/Alexios_I_Komnenos) against the Pechenegs in the [Battle of Levounion](/wiki/Battle_of_Levounion).[[7]](#cite_note-7)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp) A couple of weeks afterwards the Cumans invaded the Balkans. After the [Battle of Kalka River](/wiki/Battle_of_Kalka_River) a large group of 10,000[[85]](#cite_note-85) Cumans invaded Thrace where they pillaged towns that had recently come under the control of the [Nicaean Empire](/wiki/Empire_of_Nicaea). This continued until 1242 when Nicaean emperor [John III Doukas Vatatzes](/wiki/John_III_Doukas_Vatatzes), in response to the situation, won their favour with "gifts and diplomacy". Thereafter he succeeded in settling most of them in [Anatolia](/wiki/Anatolia) throughout the [Meander valley](/wiki/Büyük_Menderes_River) and the region east of [Philadelphia](/wiki/Alaşehir). Most of these Cumans enrolled in the army and soon afterwards were baptized. Vatatzes' policy towards the Cumans was distinguished by its enormous scale and relatively successful outcome.

Cumans had served as mercenaries in the armies of the [Byzantine Empire](/wiki/Byzantine_Empire) since the reign of [Alexios I Komnenos](/wiki/Alexios_I_Komnenos) (1081–1118)[[6]](#cite_note-6) and were one of the most important elements of the Byzantine army until the mid-14th century. They served as light cavalry (horse-archers) and as standing troops;[[6]](#cite_note-6) those in the central army were collectively called *Skythikoi/Skythikon*.[[85]](#cite_note-85) Other Cumans lived a more dangerous life as highlanders on the fringes of the empire; possibly being involved in a mixture of agriculture and transhumance, acting as a buffer between Nicaean farmers and Turkic nomads. These Cumans were frequently mustered for Byzantine campaigns in Europe.[[6]](#cite_note-6) In 1242 they were employed by Vatatzes in his siege of [Thessaloniki](/wiki/Thessaloniki). In 1256 emperor [Theodore II Laskaris](/wiki/Theodore_II_Laskaris) left a force of 300 Cumans with the Nicaean governor of Thessaloniki. In 1259, 2000 Cuman light cavalry fought for the [Nicaean Empire](/wiki/Empire_of_Nicaea) at the [Battle of Pelagonia](/wiki/Battle_of_Pelagonia). Cumans were again involved in 1261, where the majority of the 800 troops under [Alexios Strategopoulos](/wiki/Alexios_Strategopoulos) that retook Constantinople, were Cumans. Large Cuman contingents were also part of the Byzantine Emperor [Michael VIII Palaiologos'](/wiki/Michael_VIII_Palaiologos) European campaigns of 1263–1264, 1270–1272 and 1275. Cumans were again employed by emperor [Andronikos II Palaiologos](/wiki/Andronikos_II_Palaiologos) in 1292, in his campaign against the [Despotate of Epirus](/wiki/Despotate_of_Epirus). The Cumans, together with Turk mercenaries, terminated the campaign by an unauthorized retreat.

In contrast to their light cavalry counterparts, Cuman standing troops appear as a distinct group only once, albeit very significantly. During the election of Emperor [Michael VIII Palaiologos](/wiki/Michael_VIII_Palaiologos) to the regency in 1258, after the consultation of Latin mercenaries, the Cumans present at the court offered their opinion on the matter in "good Greek". This is indicative of the Cumans spending considerable time in the company of Greek speakers. The importance of this Cuman group came from its tendency to foster assimilation (Hellenization) and, through time, the social advancement of its members. An example of this influential group was Sytzigan (known as Syrgiannes after baptism), who before 1290 became [*Megas Domestikos*](/wiki/Domestikos#Grand_Domestic) (Commander-in-Chief of the Army) under Emperor [Andronikos II](/wiki/Andronikos_II_Palaiologos).[[85]](#cite_note-85) His son, [Syrgiannes Palaiologos](/wiki/Syrgiannes_Palaiologos), attained the title of [Pinkernes](/wiki/Pinkernes) and was a friend of [Andronikos III Palaiologos](/wiki/Andronikos_III_Palaiologos) and [John Kantakouzenos](/wiki/John_Kantakouzenos_(pinkernes)). An act from the archive of the Lavra of Athanasios mentions Cuman *Stratioti* (mercenaries from the Balkans) in the region of [Almopia](/wiki/Almopia) who received two *douloparoikoi* in 'pronoia' (a Byzantine form of feudalism based on government assignment of revenue-yielding property to prominent individuals in return for military service) some time before 1184.[[6]](#cite_note-6)[[86]](#cite_note-86)

## Culture[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=9)]

[thumb|Cuman camp](/wiki/File:Ivan_Bilibin_177.jpg) [thumb|Cuman representation in the](/wiki/File:Radzivill_Chronicle_Cumans.jpg) [Radziwiłł Chronicle](/wiki/Radziwiłł_Chronicle)

Horses were central to Cuman culture and way of life,[[23]](#cite_note-23) and their main activity was animal husbandry. The knight, [Robert de Clari](/wiki/Robert_de_Clari), described the Cumans as nomadic warriors who raised horses, sheep, goats, camels, and cattle. They moved north with their herds in summer and returned south in winter. Some of the Cumans led a semi-settled life and took part in trading and farming, as well as blacksmithing, furriery, shoe making, saddle making, bow making, and clothes making.[[87]](#cite_note-87) They mainly sold and exported animals, mostly horses, and animal products. They attached feeding sacks to the [bridles](/wiki/Bridle) of their horses, allowing them to cover great distances. They could go on campaign with little baggage and carry everything they needed. They wore [sheepskin](/wiki/Sheepskin) and were armed with composite bows and arrows. They prayed to the first animal they saw in the morning.[[88]](#cite_note-88)[[89]](#cite_note-89) Like the Bulgars, the Cumans were known to drink blood from their horse (they would cut a vein) when they ran out of water far from an available source. Their traditional diet consisted of soup with millet and meat and included beer, curdled mare's milk, [kumis](/wiki/Kumis), and bread (though bread could be rare depending on location).[[23]](#cite_note-23) The fundamental unit of Cuman society was the family, made up of blood relatives.[[90]](#cite_note-90) A group of families formed a clan, led by a chief; a group of clans formed a tribe, led by a khan. A typical Cuman clan was named after an object, animal, or a leader of the clan. The names of the leaders of clans or tribes sometimes ended in "apa/aba". Cuman names were descriptive and represented a personal trait or an idea. Clans lived together in movable settlements named 'Cuman towers' by Kievan Rus' chroniclers.

The Cuman-Kipchak tribes formed sub-confederations governed by charismatic ruling houses – they acted independently of each other and had opposing policies. The territory controlled distinguished each Cuman tribe: the "seashore" Cuman tribes lived in the steppes between the mouths of the [Dnieper River](/wiki/Dnieper_River) and the [Dniester River](/wiki/Dniester_River); the "coastal" tribes lived on the coast of the [Sea of Azov](/wiki/Sea_of_Azov); the "Dnieper" tribes lived on both banks of the bend in the Dnieper Valley; and the "Don" Cumans lived in the Don River Valley.[[90]](#cite_note-90) D. A. Rasovskii notes five separate independent Cuman groups: the central Asiatic, the Volga-Yayik (or Ural), the Donets-Don (between the Volga and the Dnieper), the lower course of the Dnieper, and the Danube.[[34]](#cite_note-34)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp) The Rus' grouped the Cuman-Kipchaks into two categories: the Non Wild Polvcians – 'civilised' Cumans of the western part of the Cuman-Kipchak confederation who had friendly relations with Kieven Rus' – and the Wild Polvcians  – who formed the eastern part of the confederation and who had hostile relations with Kieven Rus'.[[14]](#cite_note-14)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp) As the Cuman-Kipchaks gained more territory, they drove off or dominated many tribes – such as the Oghuz, various Iranian and Finno-Ugrian tribes, Pechenegs, and Slav groups. They also raided the Byzantine Empire and a few times joined the Normans from southern Italy and the Hungarians in doing so. Over the course of time feudalism would take over the traditional social structure of the Cumans, and this led to the changing of identity from kinship to territory-based. Some of the Cumans eventually settled and led sedentary lives involved in agriculture and crafts such as leather and iron working and weapon making. Others became merchants and traded from their towns along the ancient trade routes to regions such as the Orient, Middle East, and Italy.[[23]](#cite_note-23) The Cumans also played the role of middlemen in trade between Byzantium and the East, which passed through the Cuman-controlled ports of [Sudak](/wiki/Sudak) (Surozh), [Oziv](/wiki/Oziv), and [Saksyn](/wiki/Saksyn). Several land routes between Europe and the Near East ran through Cuman territories: the [Zaloznyi](/wiki/Zaloznyi), the [Solianyi](/wiki/Solianyi), and the [Varangian](/wiki/Varangian). Cuman towns – [Sharukan](/wiki/Sharukan), [Suhrov](/wiki/Suhrov)/Sugrov, and Balin – appeared in the [Donets](/wiki/Donets) River Basin; they were also inhabitted by other peoples besides the Cumans. Due to the practice of Cuman towns being named after their khans, town names changed over time – the town of Sharukan appears as Osenev, Sharuk, and Cheshuev. Rock figures called [stone babas](/wiki/Kurgan_stelae), which are found throughout southern Ukraine and other areas on the steppes of Russia, were closely connected with the Cuman religious cult of shamanism. The Cumans tolerated all religions, and Islam and Christianity spread quickly among them. As they were close to the Kievan Rus' principalities, Cuman khans and important families began to slavicize their names – for example, Yaroslav Tomzakovych, Hlib Tyriievych, Yurii Konchakovych, and Danylo Kobiakovych. Ukrainian princely families were often connected by marriage with Cuman khans, lessening wars and conflicts. Sometimes the princes and khans waged joint campaigns; for example, in 1221 they attacked the trading town of [Sudak](/wiki/Sudak) on the Black Sea, which was held by the [Seljuk Turks](/wiki/Seljuk_Turks) and which interfered with Rus'-Cuman trade.[[52]](#cite_note-52) [thumb|A](/wiki/File:A_Mamluk_from_Aleppo.jpg) [Mamluk](/wiki/Mamluks) nobleman from [Aleppo](/wiki/Aleppo).

The Cumans were reported to be handsome people with blond hair, fair skin and blue eyes,[[13]](#cite_note-13)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp)[[31]](#cite_note-31) and desirable women.[[91]](#cite_note-91)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp)[[92]](#cite_note-92) Cuman women had a high reputation for their beauty amongst the Russian aristocracy.[[14]](#cite_note-14)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp) Robert de Clari reported that the Cumans often wore a sleeveless sheepskin vest, usually worn in conjunction with bracers.[[23]](#cite_note-23) Underneath the vest was worn a short or long sleeved tunic/tabard, extended to the mid calf, splitting in the front and back between the legs. Men wore trousers and a [caftan](/wiki/Caftan), each fastened by a belt, which was the traditional costume. The women also wore caftans, as well as pants, dresses, and tunics shorter than those worn by men, sometimes split along the front, back, and sides. Clothes were commonly coloured deep crimson for decoration. Cuman men wore distinguishing conical felt or leather hats, pointed at the top with a broad brim (if made of felt) or a fur trim around the base (if made of leather). The brim of the hat formed a sharp angle at the front and upturned on the rear and at the sides. Women wore a large variety of head dresses and also wore conical hats but with a felt top and a cloth veil extending down the back. This veil only covered the back neck and not the hair or face; another source states that it did cover the hair and that sometimes one or two braids were visible. Women wore a variety of jewellery, such as [torques](/wiki/Torc), a type of neck ornament consisting of one or several metal strands attached to a ribbon or necklace and hung around the neck, and head dresses that were made of a series of silver rings on a solid, cylindrically shaped material that was fastened at the temples. The men shaved the top of their head, while the rest of the hair was plaited into several braids; they also had prominent moustaches. Other Cumans also wore their hair very long, without shaving the top. The women had their hair loose or braided with buns twisting at the side. Both men and women followed a tradition of braiding coloured ribbons into their hair. For footwear, Cuman men and women wore long leather or felt boots with support straps connected to their belt. Both men and women wore cloth or metal arm bands.[[23]](#cite_note-23)[[81]](#cite_note-81)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp)[[85]](#cite_note-85)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp)

When the Cuman-Kipchaks swore oaths it was done with swords in the hands that touched the body of a dog cut in two. The Italian Franciscan monk, traveler, and historian, [John of Plano Carpini](/wiki/Giovanni_da_Pian_del_Carpine), says that when the Hungarian prince married the Cuman princess, ten Cumans swore over a dog cut in half with a sword that they would defend the Kingdom of Hungary. The Christian writer and historian of the crusades, Jean de Joinville (c. 1224–c. 1317), mentions that when the Cumans and Byzantines made an alliance, the Cumans made a dog pass between both sides and cut it with a sword, obliging the Byzantines to do the same; the Cumans said that both they and the Byzantines should be cut in pieces if they failed each other. Joinville described a Cuman noble's funeral: he was buried seated on a chair whilst his best horse and best sergeant were placed beside him alive. Prior to this the sergeant was given a large sum of money by the Cuman leaders for the purpose of handing it back to them when they too would come into the afterlife. The Cuman khan also gave a letter of recommendation to the sergeant, which was addressed to the first king of the Cumans, in which the present king testified to the sergeant's good character. After these proceedings a huge mound was raised above the tomb. Cumans were buried in their warrior outfits.[[81]](#cite_note-81)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp)[[93]](#cite_note-93) Wolves were greatly respected by the Cuman-Kipchaks, and they would sometimes howl along with them in commune. The personal bodyguard of the khan were called Bori (wolf in Turkic). Like other nomadic nations, the Cuman-Kipchaks initiated blood bonds (with the purpose of symbolically cementing a bond) by the drinking or mixing of each other's blood.

Amongst the Cuman-Kipchaks ethnic names often became personal names – this was also practiced amongst the Mongols. This practice involved naming newborns after the names of conquered tribes and people. Names such as 'Baskord' (from the [Bashkirs](/wiki/Bashkirs)), 'Imek' (from the [Kimeks](/wiki/Kimeks)), 'Kitan' (from the Mongol [Khitan people](/wiki/Khitan_people)), and 'Urus' were used by the Cumans.[[10]](#cite_note-10)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp) Friar [William of Rubruk](/wiki/William_of_Rubruk), a Franciscan traveler who visited the Mongols in 1253-55, provides another account of Cuman customs. He mentions that Cumans built statues for dead notables, facing east and holding a cup (these statues are not to be confused with the balbals, which represent the enemies that were killed by him). He also notes that for richer notables, the Cumans built tombs in the form of houses. Rubruk gives an eyewitness account about a man who had recently died: the Cumans had hung up sixteen horses' hides, in groups of four, between high poles, facing the four points of the compass. The mourners then also placed [kumis](/wiki/Kumis) (a fermented mares' milk drink widely drunk in Inner Asia) for the dead man to consume. Other graves had plenty of stones statues placed around them (balbals), with four tall ones placed to face the points of the compass. Rubrick also wrote "Here the Cumans, who are called Chapchat [Kipchak] used to pasture their flocks, but the Germans call them Valans and their province Valania, and Isidorus calls (the region stretching) from the river Don as far as the Azov Sea and the Danube, Alania. And this land stretches from the Danube as far as the Don, the borderline of Asia and Europe; one can reach there in two months with quick riding as the Tatars ride.... and this country which extends from the Danube to the Tanais [Don] was all inhabited by the Chapcat Comans, and even further from the Don to the Volga, which rivers are at a distance of ten days' journey...And in the territory between these two rivers [i.e. the Don and the Volga] where we continued our way, the Cuman Kipchaks lived."[[10]](#cite_note-10)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp)[[93]](#cite_note-93)[[94]](#cite_note-94) For many years before the Mongol invasion, the Cuman-Kipchaks were in ambiguous relationships with their neighbours (often through marital and martial alliances), the Kwarizmians, Byzantines, Georgians, and the Rus'; at a given time they could be at peace with one, at war with another.[[95]](#cite_note-95) The Byzantine Empire hesitated to go to war with the Cuman-Kipchaks north of the Danube River; instead, like the Hungarians, they chose to bribe them. Since Kwarizm had more important enemies, they hired the Cuman-Kipchaks for garrison duty.[[23]](#cite_note-23) There were numerous ways the Cuman-Kipchaks could make a living as nomadic warriors. One could partake in questing and raiding with their tribe and subsequently keep the spoils. Another avenue was to seek employment as a mercenary in exchange for the guarantee of loot. One could serve in a garrison, although this caused those Cumans to eventually forget their light cavalry skills and become poor infantry. This was fully exploited when the Mongol army destroyed the Cuman-Kipchak garrison in [Samarkand](/wiki/Samarkand).[[96]](#cite_note-96) Cuman-Kipchak women fought beside their fellow male warriors. Women were shown great respect and would often ride on a horse or wagon while the men walked.[[23]](#cite_note-23)[[87]](#cite_note-87)[[91]](#cite_note-91)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp)

In their travels the Cumans used wagons to transport supplies as well as weapons such as mangonels and ballistas. Light felt tents with a frame consisting of wooden laths could be carried on top of wagons and easily be placed on the ground. The windows of the tents were "grilled" in such a way that it was difficult to see in but easy to see out. As the Cumans became more settled, they constructed forts for defence and settlement purposes.[[23]](#cite_note-23) The Cuman-Kipchaks used dung for fires when firewood was not available. The Cumans had very strict rules (taboos) against theft, and thus would, without prohibition, loosen their horses, camels, and livestock (sheep, oxen) without shepherds or guards when they were stationary. The law of blood vengeance was common among the Cumans-Kipchaks.[[87]](#cite_note-87) The Cuman calendar was atypical, as it showed neither specific Christian influences nor any trace of the Chinese-Turkic twelve-year animal cycle; it appeared to be an archaic system.[[4]](#cite_note-4)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp)

### Military tactics[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=10)]

[thumb|Battle between the Cumans and Grand Duke](/wiki/File:Grand_Duke_Andrei_Bogolyubsky._War_with_Polovtsy_(Boris_Chorikov).jpg) [Andrei Bogolyubsky](/wiki/Andrei_Bogolyubsky)

Up until the late 11th and early 12th centuries the Cumans fought mainly as light cavalry, later developing heavy cavalry. The main weapons of the Cumans were the recurved and, later, the composite bow (worn on the hip with the quiver), and the javelin, curved sword (a sabre less curved than a scimitar), mace, and heavy spear for lancing. Due to European influence, some of the later period Cumans wielded war hammers and axes. For defense they used a round or almond shaped shield, short sleeved [mail armour](/wiki/Mail_(armour)), consisting of commonly alternating butted and riveted rows, lamelar (iron or leather), leather cuirass, shoulder spaulders, conical or dome shaped iron helmet with a detachable iron or bronze anthropomorphic face plate (gold for princes and khans), and at times a camail suspended from the helmet, consisting of chain or leather. The armour was strengthened by leather or felt disks that were attached to the chest and back. The items suspended from the belts were a bow case with bow, a quiver, a knife and a comb. They also wore elaborate masks in battle, shaped like and worn over the face. The Cuman Mamluks in Egypt were, in general, more heavily armed than Mongol warriors, sometimes having body armour and carrying a bow and arrow, axe, club, sword, dagger, mace, shield and a lance. The Cuman Mamluks rode on larger Arabian horses in comparison to steppe ponies[[23]](#cite_note-23)[[48]](#cite_note-48)[[81]](#cite_note-81)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp)

The commonly employed Cuman battle tactic was repeated attacks by light cavalry archers, facing and shooting to the rear of the horse, then a feigned retreat and skilled ambush. To maintain this tactic to optimum efficiency the Cumans kept a large number of reserve horses (10–12 remounts) to replace fatigued ones, so that a fresh horse was available at all times. The horsemen used oval shaped stirrups and employed a large bridle for their horses. Another important accessory was a small whip attached to the rider's wrist. Tribal banners were either made of cloth with tribal emblems or dyed horse hair – with more tails signifying greater importance of the warrior or group. Some of the Cumans who moved west were influenced by Western heraldry, and they eventually displayed hybridized European-Cuman heraldry.[[85]](#cite_note-85) [Niketas Choniates](/wiki/Niketas_Choniates), while describing a [Battle of Beroia](/wiki/Battle_of_Beroia) in the late 12th century, gave an interesting description of the nomadic battle techniques of the Cumans:

They [The Cumans] fought in their habitual manner, learnt from their fathers. They would attack, shoot their arrows and begin to fight with spears. Before long they would turn their attack into flight and induce their enemy to pursue them. Then they would show their faces instead of their backs, like birds cutting through the air, and would fight face to face with their assailants and struggle even more bravely. This they would do several times, and when they gained the upper hand over the [Romans](/wiki/Ρωμιοί) [Byzantines], they would stop turning back again. Then they would draw their swords, release an appalling roar, and fall upon the Romans quicker than a thought. They would seize and massacre those who fought bravely and those who behaved cowardly alike."[[10]](#cite_note-10)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp)

Robert de Clari gave another description:

Each one has at least ten or twelve horses, and they have them so well-trained that they follow them wherever they want to take them, and they mount first on one and then on another. When they are on a raid, each horse has a bag hung on his nose, in which his fodder is put, and he feeds as he follows his master, and they do not stop going by night or by day. And they ride so hard that they cover in one day and one night fully six days' journey or seven or eight. And while they are on the way they will not seize anything or carry it along, before their return, but when they are returning, then they seize plunder and make captives and take anything they can get. Nor do they go armed, except that they wear a garment of sheepskin and carry bows and arrows.[[34]](#cite_note-34)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp)

## Religion[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=11)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) The Cumans practiced [Shamanism](/wiki/Shamanism) and [Tengrism](/wiki/Tengrism). Their belief system had [animistic](/wiki/Animist) and shamanistic elements; they celebrated the [cult of ancestors](/wiki/Ancestor_worship) and [provided the dead with objects](/wiki/Grave_goods) whose lavishness paralleled the recipient's [social rank](/wiki/Social_rank).

The Cumans referred to their shamans as Kam (female: kam katun); their activities were referred to as qamlyqet, meaning "to [prophesy](/wiki/Prophesy)." The Cumans used [Iranian](/wiki/Iranian_language) words to designate certain concepts: *uchuchmak* (identical in [Turkic](/wiki/Turkish_language)) meaning"fly away, paradise" and *keshene* meaning "nest" (the concept was that the soul has the form of a bird).[[93]](#cite_note-93) Funerals for important members involved firstly creating a [mound](/wiki/Burial_mound), then placing the dead inside, along with various items deemed useful in the afterlife, a horse (like the [Bulgars](/wiki/Bulgars)), and sometimes a servant or slave.[[23]](#cite_note-23) Cuman [divination](/wiki/Divination) practices used animals, especially the wolf and dog. The dog "It/Kopec"[Template:Dubious](/wiki/Template:Dubious) was sacred to the Cuman-Kipchaks, to the extent that an individual, [tribe](/wiki/Tribe), or [clan](/wiki/Clan) would be named after the dog or type of dog. Cumans had shamans who communicated with the [spirit world](/wiki/Spirit_world) – they were consulted for questions of outcomes.[[75]](#cite_note-75) The Cumans in Christian territories were baptised in 1227 by Robert, [Archbishop of Esztergom](/wiki/Archbishop_of_Esztergom), in a mass [baptism](/wiki/Baptism) in [Moldavia](/wiki/Moldavia) on the orders of Bortz Khan, who swore allegiance to King [Andrew II of Hungary](/wiki/Andrew_II_of_Hungary).[[74]](#cite_note-74)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp)

## Codex Cumanicus[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=12)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) The [Codex Cumanicus](/wiki/Codex_Cumanicus), which was written by Italian merchants and German missionaries between 1294 and 1356,[[39]](#cite_note-39)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp) was a linguistic manual for the Turkic [Cuman language](/wiki/Cuman_language) of the Middle Ages, designed to help Catholic missionaries communicate with the Cumans.[[93]](#cite_note-93) It consisted of a Latin-Persian-Cuman glossary, grammar observations, lists of consumer goods and Cuman riddles.[[39]](#cite_note-39)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp)[[93]](#cite_note-93) The first copy was written in the monastery of St. John near Saray. A later copy (1330–1340) is thought to have been written in a Franciscan monastery. Later, different sections of the codex, such as the Interpreter's Book (which was for commercial, merchant use) and the Missionaries' Book (which contains sermons, psalms and other religious texts along with Cuman riddles) were combined. The Interpreter's Book consists of 110 pages; pages 1–63 contain alphabetically arranged verbs in Latin, Persian and Cuman. The Missionaries' Book contains vocabulary listings, grammatical notes, Cuman riddles, religious texts and some Italian verses. The Cuman riddles are the oldest documented material of Turkic riddles and constitute Turkic folklore. Some of the riddles have almost identical modern equivalents (for example Kazakh). The Codex Cumanicus is composed of several Cuman-Kipchak dialects.[[30]](#cite_note-30) It is currently housed in the [Biblioteca Marciana](/wiki/Biblioteca_Marciana), in [Venice](/wiki/Venice) (Cod. Mar. Lat. DXLIX). Some parts from the Codex's [Pater Noster](/wiki/Lord's_Prayer) are shown below: *Atamız kim köktesiñ. Alğışlı bolsun seniñ atıñ, kelsin seniñ xanlığıñ, bolsun seniñ tilemekiñ – neçikkim kökte, alay [da] yerde. Kündeki ötmegimizni bizge bugün bergil. Dağı yazuqlarımıznı bizge boşatqıl – neçik biz boşatırbiz bizge yaman etkenlerge. Dağı yekniñ sınamaqına bizni quurmağıl. Basa barça yamandan bizni qutxarğıl. Amen!*

In English, the text is: *Our Father which art in heaven. Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins as we forgive those who have done us evil. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.*

In Modern [Turkish](/wiki/Turkish_language), the text is: *Atamız sen göktesin. Alkışlı olsun senin adın, gelsin senin hanlığın, olsun senin dileğin– nasıl ki gökte, ve yerde. Gündelik ekmeğimizi bize bugün ver. Ve de yazıklarımızdan (suçlarımızdan) bizi bağışla– nasıl biz bağışlarız bize yaman (kötülük) edenleri. Ve de şeytanın sınamasından bizi koru. Tüm yamandan (kötülükten) bizi kurtar. Amin!*   
Cuman prayer: [thumb|right|200px|A page from](/wiki/File:Codex_Cumanicus_58.jpg) [Codex Cumanicus](/wiki/Codex_Cumanicus)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Cuman Language** | **Modern Turkish** | **English** |
| Bizim atamız kim-szing kökte Szentlenszing szening ading Düs-szün szening könglügüng Necsik-kim dzserde alaj kökte Bizing ekmegimizni ber bizge büt-bütün künde Ilt bizing minimizni Necsik-kim biz ijermiz bizge ötrü kelgenge Iltme bizni ol dzsamanga Kutkar bizni ol dzsamannan Szen barszing bu kücsli bu csin ijgi [Tengri](/wiki/Tengrism), amen. | Bizim atamız ki sensin gökte Şenlensin senin adın Hoş olsun senin gönlün Nasıl ki yerde ve tüm gökte Bizim ekmeğimizi ver bize bütün günde İlet bizim aklımızı Nasıl ki biz boyun eğeriz bize emir gelince İletme bizi o yamana Kurtar bizi o yamandan Sen varsın bu güçte bu yücelikte Tanrım, amin. | Our father who is in the sky May your name be glorified May your desire be done On the ground and in the sky Give us our bread in all days Deliver our mind When you give the command we will bow down Do not deliver us to evil Save us from all harm You exist in this strength and highness my God, amen. |

The Cumans' language was a form of Kipchak Turkic and was, until the 14th century, a lingua franca over much of the Eurasian steppes.[[97]](#cite_note-97)[[98]](#cite_note-98) A number of Cuman-Kipcaq-Arabic grammar glossaries appeared in Mamluk lands in the 14th and 15th centuries. It is supposed that the Cumans had their own writing system (mentioned by the historian Gyárfás), which could have been a runic script. The supposition that the Cumans had a runic script is also suggested by the academic Hakan Aydemir, who mentioned a buckle with runic writing from a Cuman grave[[39]](#cite_note-39)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp) There was also some Khazar Jewish linguistic influence upon the Cumans – the Cuman words *shabat* and *shabat kun* (meaning Saturday) are related to the Hebrew word *Shabbat* (meaning Sabbath). These Hebrew influences in the language may have resulted from contact or intermarriege between Khazars and some of the Cumans in the mid-11th century.[[30]](#cite_note-30)[[99]](#cite_note-99)

## Polovtsian leaders (Khans) (Ruthenian chronicles)[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=13)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main)

* [Iskal](/wiki/Esegel) or [Eskel](/wiki/Ru:Эскелы) (possibly a self-name of a [Bulgaric](/wiki/Bulgars) tribe ([Nushibi](/wiki/Nushibi))) who were mentioned by [Ahmad ibn Fadlan](/wiki/Ahmad_ibn_Fadlan) after visiting Volga region in 921–922. They also were mentioned by [Abu Saʿīd Gardēzī](/wiki/Abu_Saʿīd_Gardēzī) in his *Zayn al-Akhbār*. According to [Bernhard Karlgren](/wiki/Bernhard_Karlgren), Eskels became the [Hungarian people](/wiki/Hungarian_people) [Székelys](/wiki/Székelys). [Yury Zuev](/wiki/Yury_Zuev) thought that *Iskal* who is mentioned in the [Laurentian Codex](/wiki/Laurentian_Codex) about the first military encounter of Cumans against the Ruthenians on February 2, 1061, is personification of a tribal name.
* [Sharukan](/wiki/Ru:Шарукан)/Sharagan (also known as Sharukan the Elder), grand father of Konchak. He was another Polovotsian khan who was victorious against the Ruthenian army of Yaroslavichi at the Alta river ([Battle of the Alta River](/wiki/Battle_of_the_Alta_River)). According to the [Novgorod First Chronicle](/wiki/Novgorod_First_Chronicle) Sharukan was taken as prisoner by [Svyatoslav II of Kiev](/wiki/Svyatoslav_II_of_Kiev) in 1068, while no such information is provided in the [Laurentian Codex](/wiki/Laurentian_Codex). In May of 1107 along with Bonyak, Sharukan raided couple of Ruthenian cities ([Pereyaslav](/wiki/Pereyaslav) and [Lubny](/wiki/Lubny)), however already in August of the same year the collective Ruthenian army led by Svyatoslav carried out a devastating defeat to the Cuman Horde forcing Sharukan to flee.
* [Bonyak](/wiki/Ru:Боняк)/[Maniak](/wiki/Boniak),[[100]](#cite_note-100) Cuman khan who was actively involved in civil conflicts of [Ruthenia](/wiki/Ruthenia). He had a brother Taz who perished at the [battle](/wiki/Ru:Битва_на_реке_Суле) on the [Sula River](/wiki/Sula_River) in 1107. Bonyak was last mentioned in 1167 when he was defeated by Oleg of Siveria. Bonyak was a leader of the Cuman tribe Burchevichi that resided in steppes of the [East Ukraine](/wiki/East_Ukraine) between modern cities of [Zaporizhia](/wiki/Zaporizhia) and [Donetsk](/wiki/Donetsk).
* [Tugorkan](/wiki/Ru:Тугоркан) (1028–1096), was mentioned in essays of the Byzantine Empress [Anna Komnene](/wiki/Anna_Komnene) along with his compatriot Bonyak. He perished with his son [at the battle](/wiki/Ru:Битва_на_реке_Трубеже) on the [Trubizh River](/wiki/Trubizh_River) against the Ruthenian army.
* [Syrchan](/wiki/Ru:Сырчан), a son of Sharukan. He was a leader of a Cuman tribe that lived on the right banks of [Siversky Donets](/wiki/Siversky_Donets). Chronicles mentioned that after the death of [Vladimir II Monomakh](/wiki/Vladimir_II_Monomakh), grand prince of Kiev, Syrchan sent out an emissary and a singer Orev to Georgia after his brother Atrak/[Otrok](/wiki/Otrok) (who, with 40,000 Cuman troops, was in Georgia at the time), urging him to return. Khan [Otrok](/wiki/Otrok) agreed (giving up the fame and security he had won in Georgia), after smelling *eyevshan*, the grass of his native steppe.[[11]](#cite_note-11)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp) Syrchan was mentioned in the poem of [Apollon Maykov](/wiki/Apollon_Maykov) (1821–1897) "Emshan".
* [Otrok](/wiki/Otrok)/[Atrak](/wiki/Ru:Атрак), a son of Sharukan and a brother of Syrchan. In 1111 he, along with his brother, withdrew to the Lower Don region after losing a battle against the Ruthenians. There Atrak's horde joined the local [Alans](/wiki/Alans). In 1117 his army sacked [Sarkel](/wiki/Sarkel) and 5 other cities belonging to the Torkils and Berendei forcing the local [Pechenegs](/wiki/Pechenegs), [Berendei](/wiki/Berendei) and [Torkils](/wiki/Torkils) to flee to [Ruthenia](/wiki/Ruthenia). Around the same time Atrak invaded the [Northern Caucasus](/wiki/Northern_Caucasus) where he entered into conflict with local [Circassians](/wiki/Circassians) pushing them beyond the [Kuban River](/wiki/Kuban_River). The conflict was settled by a Georgian King [David IV of Georgia](/wiki/David_IV_of_Georgia) who offered military service to Atrak against [Seljuks](/wiki/Seljuq_dynasty) in 1118. David also married the daughter of Atrak - Gurandukht. After withdrawal of Atrak away from the Don region, the Alan's duchy in [East Ukraine](/wiki/East_Ukraine) was liquidated in 1116–17. Atrak returned after the death of [Vladimir Monomakh](/wiki/Vladimir_Monomakh) in 1125.
* Khan Konchek/Konchak/Kumcheg (meaning 'trousers'), grandson of [Sharukan](/wiki/Ru:Шарукан), son of Khan [Otrok](/wiki/Otrok). He united the tribes of the eastern Cumans in the later half of the 12th century, after which in the 1170s and 1180s he launched a number of particularly destructive attacks on the settlements in the [Duchy of Kiev](/wiki/Duchy_of_Kiev), the [Principality of Chernigov](/wiki/Principality_of_Chernigov) and the [Principality of Pereyaslavl](/wiki/Principality_of_Pereyaslavl). Konchak gave aid to the princes of the [Principality of Novgorod-Seversk](/wiki/Principality_of_Novgorod-Seversk) in their struggle for control with the other Rus' princes. Along with Khan Kobiak/Kobek, Khan Konchak was routed on the Khorol River in 1184 during an assault on Kyivan Rus'. In 1185, he defeated the army of Ihor Sviatoslavych, who was taken as a prisoner. Later, Konchak laid siege to Pereiaslav and ravaged the Chernihiv and Kyiv areas. His daughter married prince Vladimir Igorevich of Putivl (Igor's son). It is hypothesized that Konchek was with the Cumans who helped Riurik Rostislavovich seizure and sack of Kiev in 1202.[[11]](#cite_note-11)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp) Khan Konchek is credited with certain technological advancements, such as [Greek fire](/wiki/Greek_fire) and a special bow that needed 50 men to operate.[[11]](#cite_note-11)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp) Konchek was noted by the Rus' to be "greater than all the Cumans".[[11]](#cite_note-11)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp) He died in a skirmish that preceded the [Battle of Kalka River](/wiki/Battle_of_Kalka_River). The struggle to repel Khan Konchak and his army by Ihor Sviatoslavych and the Rus' princes is immortalized in the epic [The Tale of Igor's Campaign](/wiki/The_Tale_of_Igor's_Campaign) ("Slovo o polku Ihorevi)."

## Legacy[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=14)]

[thumb|200px|Monument to the Asen dynasty in their capital](/wiki/File:Bulgarian_Asen_dynasty_monument_Veliko_Tarnovo_Klearchos.jpg) [Veliko Tarnovo](/wiki/Veliko_Tarnovo), [Bulgaria](/wiki/Bulgaria). The dynasty was of Cuman origin[[10]](#cite_note-10)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp) and was responsible for establishing the Second Bulgarian Empire. Sculptor: prof. Krum Damianov

As the Cumans ceased to have a state of their own, they were gradually absorbed into Eurasian populations (certain families in Hungary, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Turkey, Romania, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Tatars in Crimea).[[13]](#cite_note-13) The Cumans in Dobruja were assimilated into Bulgarian and Romanian people.[[39]](#cite_note-39)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp) Traces of the Cumans can still be found in placenames stretching from China to Macedonia, such as the city of [Kumanovo](/wiki/Kumanovo) in the northeastern [Republic of Macedonia](/wiki/Republic_of_Macedonia); a Slavic village named Kumanichevo in the Kostur (Kastoria) district of Greece, which was changed to *Lithia* after Greece obtained this territory in the 1913 Treaty of Bucharest; [Comăneşti](/wiki/Comăneşti) in [Romania](/wiki/Romania); Kuman, a city in Xinjiang, China; Kuh-e Kumana, a mountain in Lorestān, Iran; the village of Koman in Iran; Kuman, a small town in Sistan Va Baluchestan, Iran; Polovtsy, a town in Smolenskaya Oblast', Russia; Polovtsy in Mahilyowskaya Volblasts', Belarus; the steppes north of the Caucasus Mountains, referred to as Kuban as well as the Kuban River; the village of [Kumane](/wiki/Kumane) in [Serbia](/wiki/Serbia); the village of Kumanitsa, in the municipality of Ivanjica, Serbia; the municipality of Kuman in the Fier District, Fier County, southwestern Albania; Küman, a village and municipality in the Lerik Rayon of Azerbaijan; the town and district of [Ulaş](/wiki/Ulaş) in the Sivas province of Turkey; [Comana](/wiki/Comana,_Constanţa) in [Dobrogea](/wiki/Dobrogea) (also [Romania](/wiki/Romania)); the small village of Kumanite in Bulgaria; Kuman, a town in Qashqadaryo, Uzbekistan; Kuman-san, a mountain peak near Ch'unch'ŏn, Gangwon, South Korea; the town of Kumanlar in Ordu, Turkey; [Debrecen](/wiki/Debrecen) in Hungary; the village of Bugac in Hungary, the counties of [Bács-Kiskun](/wiki/Bács-Kiskun) and [Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok](/wiki/Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok) as well as the cities [Kiskunhalas](/wiki/Kiskunhalas) and [Kunszentmiklós](/wiki/Kunszentmiklós) in Hungary, the village of Kunmadaras in Greater Cumania, Hungary; and the town of Kumanov in Khmel'nyts'ka Oblast', [Ukraine](/wiki/Ukraine). The flower, [*Kumoniga*](/wiki/Melilotus) (melilot), is also a relic of the Cumans.[[31]](#cite_note-31) The [Gagauz people](/wiki/Gagauz_people) are believed by some historians to be descendents of the Cumans; the name Qipcakli occurs as a modern Gagauz surname.[[20]](#cite_note-20)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp)[[31]](#cite_note-31) The etymology of the [Sea of Azov](/wiki/Sea_of_Azov) is popularly said to derive from a certain Cuman prince named Azum or Asuf, who was killed defending a town in this region in 1067.[[101]](#cite_note-101) As the Mongols pushed westward and devastated their state, most of the Cumans fled to Hungary, as well as the Second Bulgarian Empire since they were major military allies. The Cuman participation in the creation of the Second Bulgarian Empire in 1185 and thereafter brought about basic changes in the political and ethnic sphere of Bulgaria and the Balkans.[[10]](#cite_note-10) Bulgarian Tsar [Ivan-Asen II](/wiki/Ivan_Asen_II_of_Bulgaria) was descended from Cumans and settled them in the southern parts of the country, bordering the Latin Empire and the Thessallonikan Despotate.[[31]](#cite_note-31) Those territories are in present-day Turkish Europe, Bulgaria, and the Republic of Macedonia.

The Cumans that settled in Hungary had their own self-government in a territory that bore their name, [Kunság](/wiki/Kunság), that survived until the 19th century. Two regions – Little Cumania and Greater Cumania – exist in Hungary. The name of the Cumans (*Kun*) is preserved in county names such as [Bács-Kiskun](/wiki/Bács-Kiskun), [Kunbaja](/wiki/Kunbaja) and [Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok](/wiki/Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok), and town names such as [Kiskunhalas](/wiki/Kiskunhalas), [Kunszentmiklós](/wiki/Kunszentmiklós). The Cumans were organized into four tribes in Hungary: Kolbasz/Olas in upper Cumania around Karcag and the other three in lower Cumania.

The Cuman language disappeared from Hungary in the 17th or 18th centuries, possibly following the Turkish occupation. During the 1740s, when Cuman was no longer spoken, a Cuman version of the Lord's Prayer suddenly surfaced. It was taught in schools in Greater Cumania and Little Cumania until the mid-20th century, in turn becoming a cornerstone of Cuman identity. In the 20th century enthusiastic self-styled Cumans collected 'Cuman folklore', which consisted of elements such as a traditional Cuman dance, Cuman characteristics such as pride and staunch Calvinism. (By religion, as may be seen by figures for [religion in Hungary](/wiki/Religion_in_Hungary), the Kiskunság is almost entirely Roman Catholic, whereas in Nagykunság, Protestants do outnumber Catholics, but only narrowly.) This ethnic consciousness was linked to the legal privileges attached to the Cumans' territory.[[81]](#cite_note-81)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp) Their 19th-century biographer, Gyárfás István, in 1870 was of the opinion that they originally spoke Hungarian, together with the [Iazyges](/wiki/Iazyges) population. Despite this mistake, he has the best overview on the subject[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed) concerning details of material used. Cuman influence is also present in the modern Hugarian language in the form of loanwords, particularly in the areas of horse-breeding, eating, hunting and fighting.[[81]](#cite_note-81)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp)

In 1918, after [World War I](/wiki/World_War_I), the Cuman National Council was formed in Hungary, which was an attempt to separate the [Kunság](/wiki/Kunság) region ([Greater Cumania](/wiki/Greater_Cumania) and [Little Cumania](/wiki/Little_Cumania)) from the Hungarian state, with the aim of forming a new independent Cuman state in Europe. The Cuman National Council declared the independence of Kunság, and elected its president: count Gedeon Ráday on December 18.[[102]](#cite_note-102) However the Council's efforts remained unsuccessful. In 1939, Cuman descendants organized celebrations for the 700th anniversary of their arrival in Hungary, where they emphasized their separate ethnic existence and identity with ceremonial speeches.[[103]](#cite_note-103) In 1995 The Cuman Memorial Site was inaugurated as a tribute to the Cuman ancestors and the redemption of the former Nagykun District. In 2009, and subsequently 2012, a World Meeting of the Cumans was held in Karcag.[[78]](#cite_note-78) During the first meeting, which lasted two weeks, academic conferences, historical exhibitions, publications, presentations of traditional and cultural festivals and lectures in relation to the Cumans were held. In the 2012 meeting, the minister for rural development, Sándor Fazekas, mentioned how Cuman traditions are still kept alive, such as costumes, folk songs and food.[[104]](#cite_note-104) Toponyms of the [Cuman language](/wiki/Cuman_language) origin can be found in some Romanian counties of [Vaslui](/wiki/Vaslui_County) and [Galaţi](/wiki/Galaţi_County), including the names of both counties. When some of the Cumans moved to Hungary, they brought with them their [Komondor](/wiki/Komondor) dogs. The Komondor breed has been declared one of [Hungary's](/wiki/Hungary) national treasures, to be preserved and protected from modification. The name Komondor derives from Koman-dor, meaning "Cuman dog".[[105]](#cite_note-105) [thumb|left|200px|Cuman sculpture in Kharkiv, Ukraine.](/wiki/File:Куманска_статуа_у_Харкову.jpg)

In the countries where the Cumans were assimilated, family surnames derived from the words for "Cuman" (such as *coman* or *kun*, "kuman") are not uncommon. Traces of the Cumans are the Bulgarian surnames Kunev or Kumanov (feminine Kuneva, Kumanova) and Asenov, its Macedonian variants Kunevski, Kumanovski (feminine Kumanovska); the Kazakh surname Kumanov; the widespread Hungarian surname Kun; the Hungarian surnames of Csertan, Csoreg, Kokscor, Karacs, Kekcse; the Hungarian surname of Kangur – a byname of one of the families of Karcag (the words Kangur and Karcag derive from Qongur and Qarsaq respectively, and occur as modern day clan names of the Kazakhs – the Kipchak tribes Qongur and Qarsaq, as well as names used by the Kirgyz in the Manas epic – mentioned as Kongur-bay, lord of the Mongol Kalmyk people and the warrior Kongrolu); the Hungarian surname of Kapscog (from "Kipchak")- Kapsog Tojasos Kovacs, a byname of Kovacs family, as well as the name of Eszenyi Kopscog of Hungary; and the Greek surname Asan.[[10]](#cite_note-10)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp)[[20][20]](#cite_note-20)[Template:Rp](/wiki/Template:Rp)[[78]](#cite_note-78) The names "Coman" in Romania and its derivatives, however, do not appear to have any connection to the medieval Cumans, as it was unrecorded until very recent times and the places with the highest frequency of such names has not produced any archaeological evidence of Cuman settlement.[[106]](#cite_note-106) Over time, Cuman culture exerted an influence on the Ceangăi/Hungarian [Csangos](/wiki/Csangos) and Romanian culture in Moldavia, due to the Hungarians in Moldavia socializing and mingling with the Cumans between the 14th and 15th centuries.[[107]](#cite_note-107) Hakan Aydemir, a Turkic linguist, states that the 'ir' of the Ceangăi/[Csangos](/wiki/Csangos) and [Székelys](/wiki/Székelys) dialect, which means 'carve', 'notch', as well as the words 'urk/uruk' (meaning 'lasso', 'noose'), 'dszepu (meaning 'wool') and 'korhany' (meaning 'small mountain', 'hill') are of Cuman-Kipchak origin.[[107]](#cite_note-107) Additionally, the Cumans could have also had some connection with [Székelys](/wiki/Székelys) runes. Several Romanian as well as Hungarian academics believe that a significant Cuman population lived in [Moldavia](/wiki/Moldavia) in the 15th century; these Cumans later assimilated into the Romanian population.[[107]](#cite_note-107) People in Hungary with the surname [Palóc](/wiki/Palóc) are descended from the Cumans (and possibly Kabars and Pechenegs) – *Palóc* origintates from the Slavic word *Polovets*/*Polovtsy*.[[108]](#cite_note-108) Although the Palócs were similar to the Hungarians in origins and culture, they were considered distinct groups by the Turks. The first written record of the word "palóc" as the name of a people appears in the Mezőkövesd register in 1784. Scolars believe there is also no connection between the Cumans and the Dutch surnames Kooman(s), Koman(s), Koeman(s), (De) Cooman(s) and Coman(s), used particularly in the Flemish area and the Dutch county of Zealand. They believe these surnames are medieval and were used in the meaning of 'merchant'.[[109]](#cite_note-109)