

## SHORT ESSAY ON THE GREAT MIGRATION

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**Abstract:** This short article aims to briefly present the phenomenon of great migration that occurred from the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C. to the 13<sup>th</sup> century A.D. It evolved as a constant movement of peoples to areas of Europe ruled by the Roman Empire. The great migration led to the destruction of the Roman civilisation. Another consequence was the birth of modern peoples of Europe. As regards the western part of the continent, Germanic peoples played an important role in the structure of the new modern peoples. In Eastern Europe, the Slavic peoples were the catalyser that contributed to the formation of modern peoples.

**Key-words:** migration, antiquity, the Middle Ages, development, consequences.

We have used the title “short essay” for it is impossible that a mere article should deal with all the issues raised by the demographic phenomenon known as the “great migration”, which took place between the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C. and the 13<sup>th</sup> century A.D. throughout the entire Eurasian area. In support of this statement, we may show that some of the most renowned historians that have dealt specifically with this topic, such as Ferdinand Lot<sup>2</sup> and, recently, the Caen professor Lucien Musset<sup>3</sup> and academician Victor Spinei<sup>4</sup>, have not reached final results, as they were forced to confine themselves to formulating some assumptions<sup>5</sup>. We have

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. Ferdinand Lot, *Les invasions germaniques, la pénétration mutuelle du monde barbare et du monde romain*, Payot, Paris, 1935, passim; idem, *Les invasions barbares et le peuplement de l'Europe*. Vol. 1 *Introduction à l'intelligence des derniers traités de paix*, vol. 2 *Slaves de l'est, Finno-Ougriens, Turcs et Mongols, États issus de la décomposition des empires du centre et de l'est*, Payot, Paris, 1937, passim;

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Lucien Musset, 1. *Les invasions: les vagues germaniques*, Presses universitaires de France, Paris, 1965, passim; idem, 2. *Les invasions: le second assaut contre l'Europe chrétienne*, Presses universitaires de France, Paris, 1965, passim; also translated into Romanian as: L. Musset, *Invaziile, 1, Valurile germanice*, Ed. Corint, București, 2002, passim; idem, *Invaziile, 2, Al doilea asalt asupra Europei creștine*, Ed. Corint, București, 2002, passim.

<sup>4</sup> For an attempt to treat the issue of migrations, also see Victor Spinei, *The Great Migrations in the East and South East of Europe from the Ninth to the Thirteenth Century*, Romanian Cultural Institute and Museum of Brăila Istros Publishing House, Cluj-Napoca, 2003, passim.

<sup>5</sup> The causes of migration may be given as example: F. Lot presented the demographic phenomenon as a game of balls that moved, hitting one another, while L. Musset saw it as a vast

mentioned the two great French historians and the Romanian one, for all three have noted the complexity of the phenomenon and, therefore, acknowledged their limitations in the possibility of exhaustively fulfilling the research.

As such, we shall bring before the reader the elements that we deem as fundamental in triggering the profound demographic process known as “the great migration”. We shall particularly insist on what happened in south-eastern Europe, in the Romanian area.

First of all, we must state that the term “great migration” is not altogether accurate, but only conventional. Before this phenomenon, another one, just as important, occurred. It happened in the Neolithic times and was suggestively called the Indo-European migration. It also entailed a long, vast research which has not yet been completed. Indo-Europeans migrated from the rich Asian areas to Europe, although paradoxically the latter provided fewer subsistence resources. The peoples involved in the “great migration” also followed the same path. But, perhaps, the situation seems to have changed for peoples engaged in the “great migration”. In Western Europe<sup>6</sup>, during the “great migration”, the Roman state existed. The genius of its leaders, the rebutment of perjury, corruption<sup>7</sup>, the erection of solid constructions in the service of the community by immortal architects and engineers such as Vitruvius<sup>8</sup>, the creation of state institutions – of an administration, of a justice system and of an extremely efficient army led to a state of prosperity not to be found in any other part of the world<sup>9</sup>.

Naturally, reality, often clothed in the legend that exaggerated richness, attracted poor peoples that were living far from the empire. It was better and easier for them to live on the outskirts of Roman cities or inside them than in tents lying in fields where they raised cattle or cultivated the land with mediocre results.

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historical movement within a general, perpetual movement in the history of mankind, as a continuation of the earlier movement, the Indo-European migration.

<sup>6</sup> This term may also refer to the entire area of the continent within the boundaries set nowadays (cf. Jean Baptiste Duroselle, *L'idée d'Europe dans l'histoire*, Denoël, Paris, 1965, p. 69; Jacques Le Goff, *Civilizația occidentului medieval*, Ed. Științifică și Enciclopedică, București, 1971, pp. 39-53).

<sup>7</sup> An example in this respect are the four speeches of the lawyer Marcus Tullius Cicero, the Catilinarian Orations (cf. N. I. Barbu, *Aspecte din viața romană în scrisorile lui Cicero*, Ed. Academiei, București, 1959, passim; for the Romanian translation of the *Catilinarian Orations*, see Marcus Tullius Cicero, *Catilinare*, in idem, *Opere alese*, publ. by Gh. Guțu, vol. 1, Ed. Univers, București, 1973, p. 109).

<sup>8</sup> For the work of the great Roman architect Vitruvius, see Marcus Vitruvius Pollio, *Despre arhitectură*, translated and published by G. M. Cantacuzino and Grigore Ionescu, Editura Academiei, București, 1964; also see G. M. Cantacuzino, *Introducere la opera lui Vitruviu. Scrisori către Simon*, Ed. Meridiane, București, 1993, passim.

<sup>9</sup> See Th. Mommsen, *Istorie romană*, translated by Joachim Nicolaus, 4 vol., Ed. Științifică și Enciclopedică, București, 1987.

At the same time, many of the migrators were forced to leave their places of origin because they were attacked and chased away by other stronger newcomers. We shall give one example only. In the 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D., the Goths living in the steppes north of the Black Sea were dislocated and expelled by the Huns<sup>10</sup>. Hence, Ferdinand Lot's criticable theory that migration can be compared to the movement of some balls hitting each other<sup>11</sup>.

In other cases, entire peoples were set in motion by others that assumed the role and place of rulers. The latter managed to gain and hold a dominant position, their leaders using excessive cruelty. This may be illustrated by the Avars dominating the Slavs in such a manner that people said, at the time, that "the Slav is the Avar's slave"<sup>12</sup>. Another example is that of the Hungarians who brought the Bashkirs with them. The latter were completely subordinated to the Hungarian military leaders who used them as vanguard calling them "Bozgor"<sup>13</sup>.

Migratory peoples also left their places of origin because of the outburst of some plagues, some extremely powerful diseases. They led to the decimation of those particular populations, which made them flee to other lands<sup>14</sup>.

The migrants' success in the fight against the Roman Empire was also the result of several things. First, the blacksmiths that forged weapons in the migrators' world found superior working methods which enabled them to make swords, lances, arrowheads, shields, helmets, etc., that were better than those used by the Roman army<sup>15</sup>.

Secondly, one should consider currency devaluation. The gold of imperial treasuries decreased. The gold of *Aerarium Populi Romani* diminished after the 2<sup>nd</sup> century A.D. when the Roman Empire ceased its conquests and no longer managed to bring precious metal from the Near East to Europe. Therefore, in imperial mints, the coin core was minted in iron or lead and only the thin coating remained gold or silver<sup>16</sup>. Of course, this caused distrust in central authorities and led to the provincialisation of the army.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Lucien Musset, *Invaziile*, vol. 1, Romanian translation, ed. cit., p. 121.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. F. Lot, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, ed. cit., passim.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Lucien Musset, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, Romanian translation, ed. cit., p. 173; idem, vol. 2, ed. in French, p. 87 and the following.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. V. Ciocîltan, *Wilhelm von Rubrukus Angaben über Rumänen und Baschkiren im Lichte der orientalischen Quellen*, in "Südost-Forschungen", Bd. 42 (1983), pp. 113-122; idem, *Români, unguri și...baskiri*, in "Magazin istoric", year 29, no. 7 (1995), pp. 289-293.

<sup>14</sup> In early 7<sup>th</sup> century, the defence of the Danubian border of the Byzantine Empire was no longer possible. This was due to the outbreak of a terrible plague that destroyed the population of Stratioti. It was then that the Slavic tribes managed to penetrate into the south of the Danube. But they too were, partially, hit by this plague that doctors have not still been able to define. Then a part of the Slavs and Avars were decimated as well and they made their way to other lands. The Slavs went to the territory of future Yugoslavia, and the Avars to the present-day area of Hungary.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Radu Manolescu, *Urmările marii migrații a popoarelor pentru Europa Apuseană*, in "Studii și articole de istorie", IX, 1967, pp. 273-291.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Santo Mazzarino, *Aspetti sociali dell quarto secolo: Ricerche di storia tardo-romana*, L'Erma di Bretshneider, Roma, 1951, passim; C. E. King, *The Role of Gold in the Latter Third*

Lastly, one should not forget the barbarisation of the empire. People coming from the migratory tribes and sometimes even freed slaves came to occupy the throne of emperors. Emperors had to adjust the legislation to the new situation. A conclusive proof of that is Emperor Caracalla's constitution<sup>17</sup>.

Under these circumstances, the migrations naturally entailed positive effects on the newcomers and had bad, disastrous consequences for the Roman Empire. In some cases, as that of the Celts that roamed around Europe between the fourth century B.C. and the first century A.D., a surprise attack against Rome followed by a temporary success resulted in their settling down in peripheral areas where they were received as colonists. In those areas, they tried to create cities, the measure of a people's civilisation. And so emerged Singidunum<sup>18</sup>, Noviodunum<sup>19</sup>, etc., but they were and are a far cry from the degree of development of Roman cities.

Germanic tribes followed, possibly immediately after them. They were generally known as Goths, a usual name in ancient times<sup>20</sup>. Depending on their geographic position, they were called Visigoths and Ostrogoths. They migrated slowly, from the first century B.C. to the fifth century A.D., to Western Europe and northern Africa. They contributed to the formation of mediaeval states and modern peoples in Western Europe. Thus, they formed the Kingdom of Longobards, hence the name Lombardy, the Vandal Kingdom resulted in Andalusia, as it has been known since, the Kingdom of Goths and Alans named Gotalania became Catalonia, etc.

Some smaller tribes got lost in the multitude of indigenous populations. Such was the case with the Taifals, whose traces were uncovered around the city of Ploiești<sup>21</sup>, or with the Goths in the steppes north of the Black Sea, whose traces were found and proved by Nicolae Milescu Spatharius<sup>22</sup>.

The most precious vestige left by the Ostrogoths on the Romanian territory is the treasure found at Pietroasele. The gold objects presented and analysed by

Century A.D., in "Rivista Italiana di Numismatica", 95 (1993), pp. 439-452; R. Bland, *The Changing Patterns of Hoards of Precious-Metal Coins in the Late Empire*, in "Antiquité Tardive", 5 (1997), pp. 29-55; C. Katsari, *Bimetalism and the Circulation of Gold Coins during the Third and Fourth Centuries AD*, in "Münstersche Beiträge zur antiken Handelsgeschichte", 22, no. 1, 2003, pp. 48-68.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Lucien Musset, *Invaziile*, vol. 1, Romanian translation, ed. cit., pp. 230-235.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. David A. Norris, *Belgrade: A Cultural History*, Oxford University Press, 2009, pp. 3-4.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Ion Barnea, *Dinogetia et Noviodunum, deux villes byzantines du Bas-Danube*, in "Revue des Etudes Sud-Est Européennes", year 9, no. 3 (1971), pp. 343-362.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. *Despre originea și țara germanilor*, transl. by Teodor Naum Ed. Științifică, București, 1957, passim; also see Eugen Cizek, *Tacit*, Ed. Univers, București, 1974, passim.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Gheorghe Diaconu, *Despre taifali în lumina cercetărilor arheologice*, in "Studii și Cercetări de Istorie Veche", year 15, no. 4 (1964), pp. 467-483.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Radu Ștefan Vergatti, *Nicolae spătarul Milescu. Viața, călătoriile, opera*, Ed. Paideia, București, 1998, pp. 249-251.

Al. Odobescu were given the name *Cloșca cu pui de aur* “The Hen with Golden Chicks” and are known all over the world<sup>23</sup>.

The Huns, who had left western China where they were known as “gun-nu” (bad people), moved towards Europe all throughout the 3<sup>rd</sup> century A.D. Some of them, the white Huns, remained in Iran. The bulk of their troops, having struck the Ostrogoths, settled down in the Pannonian Plain. Their most important notable leader was Attila, whose wooden palace was described by the Byzantine Priscus.

The traces of the Huns’ nominal rule over the Romanian lands were shown by the discovery, in Oltenia, of the largest and most beautiful Hunnish boiler<sup>24</sup>. In 452 A.D., following a raid, an unsuccessful plundering invasion in the north of Italy, Attila did not dare attack Rome. It was too big, too strong a city for him. In 451 A.D., in the fields near Troyes, Attila had been defeated by the imperial troops led by General Aetius. In March 453, he was most likely assassinated in his palace by a young woman of Germanic origins whom he had just married, Ildiko (or Gudrun, according to some accounts).

Attila’s death meant the fall of the empire of Huns: it divided into many small tribal groups. Attila remained in history not as a creator, but as a destroyer and a model of cruelty.

Immediately after the Huns came the Avars, also from Asian areas, from somewhere in Central Asia. They too were organised into a union of tribes. In their movement towards Europe, which they reached in the 5<sup>th</sup> century A.D., they involved the Slavs as well. Byzantine writers, Eginhardt<sup>25</sup>, Charlemagne’s biographer, and archaeological finds confirm that neither the Avars nor the Slavs were kinder than the Huns. They destroyed, wiped dozens of places from the face of the earth on their way. The results of archaeological excavations from Sărata Monteoru<sup>26</sup> are a conclusive example for our country.

The Avars’ settlements are relatively easy to find, for they used the circumvallation (the Avar ring). They left no positive or constructive memory on the territory of our country. Instead, the Slavs, some of whom settled alongside the Romanised population, contributed to the birth of the Romanian people and gave the name of a number of waters and places. We may mention here Ialomița, Bistrița, Dâmbovița, etc.

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<sup>23</sup> Cf. A. Odobesco, *Le tresor de Petrossa. Historique-description. Étude sur l'orfèvrerie antique*, 3 vol., J. Rotschild Editeur, Paris, 1889, 1896, 1900.

<sup>24</sup> The bronze boiler, 541 mm in height and 196 mm in diameter, dating from early fifth century, probably before 420 A.D., when the Huns had not yet settled in the Pannonian plain, was found in the village of Desa, Dolj County. It is currently in the patrimony of the National Museum of Romanian History, published by Ion Nestor, C. S. Nicolăescu-Plopșor, *Hunnische Kessel au der kleine Wallachei*, in “Germania”, 21 (1937), pp. 178-182.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Eginhard, *Viața lui Carol cel Mare*, Ed. Vremea, București, 2001, Ch. 13.

<sup>26</sup> See especially Ion Nistor, *La necropole slave d'epoque ancienne de Sărata Monteoru*, in “Dacia”, s.n., I (1957), pp. 289-296.

But one cannot overlook the reverse side of this issue. When the strange and mysterious slavisation process occurred in south-eastern Europe, especially in the Balkan Peninsula, the Slavs tore apart the crowd of Proto-Romanians and Greeks. It is then that the islands of Romanian population of Vlachs, Megleno-Romanians, Macedo-Romanians, Istro-Romanians, Farsherots, etc. emerged. This dissolution forced the Romanians, who were then in the stage of formation and consolidation, to find new ways to defend themselves by fleeing into the mountains in order to resist the offensive of the Slavs in the south.

A very successful form of Slavisation was that of another Turkic people, the Bulgarians. A Mongoloid people, probably of Turkic origins, the Bulgarians had left their homes in western Asia and, having briefly stopped in present-day eastern Ukraine and driven away by the Khazars, headed for northern Dobruja where they arrived around 674, under the command of Asparuh. They stayed there for a short time and built a circumvallation near Niculițel. In 679, led by Khagan Asparuh or Isperih, they reached and settled in the north of present-day Bulgaria. They managed to penetrate into the territory of the Byzantine Empire which, until then, had ruled over the land south of the Danube, for the troops of Stratioti there had been decimated by a terrible plague.

Very soon, the Slavisation phenomenon fully manifested itself. The Bulgarians were Slavised. Only their boyars remained Bulgarians. During Tsar Boris (852-889), in 863, when Photios (858-867; 877-886) was the Patriarch of Constantinople, upon insistent demand from Basileus Michael III (842-867), the Bulgarians were Christianised. Christianisation was performed according to the Eastern Church rite, and it was then that Boris was baptised as Michael, after his spiritual father, Basileus Michael.

Another Mongoloid population, but of Finno-Ugric origin, who followed the Bulgarians, was that of the Magyars. In 895, seven Magyar tribes led by Árpád crossed the passes of the Wooded Carpathians and penetrated into the Pannonian Plain where they settled down. They are better known due to Constantine Porphyrogenetos. They brought no good to Europe. They were always destructive. They were rightfully described in mediaeval chronicles as a cosmic catastrophe. It is enough to read Liutprand of Cremona or *Annales Sanganllenses Majores*. In their predatory attacks they always behaved as a mass swooping down on the enemy. The names of their leaders were not mentioned. But they did not know how to fight against fortresses and castles. Sweeping across the steppes on horseback, they had not learnt how to attack the fortifications. They were fortunate to have conquered Piacenza in 924: they took the population by surprise during a religious feast. Only thus could they achieve victory. In 955, at Lechfeld, the Magyars commanded by Bulcsú<sup>27</sup> were crushed by the German knights led by

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<sup>27</sup> For more on this leader of Magyars, perhaps the only one who is better known during the predatory, destructive actions in the 10<sup>th</sup> century, conducted by his people in western Europe, see L. Musset, *op.cit.*, vol. 2, French edition, p. 270.

Emperor Otto I (936-973). Following the desire to make peace with the Roman Empire and the arrival of German knights in Bavaria, Géza, the Hungarian leader, was christened by the missionary bishop Bruno of Sankt Gallen. It is significant that, in an earlier stage, Christian religion had been previously taken over by the Hungarian high society from the missionary bishop Hierotheos of Byzantium and from the Transylvanian leader Gyula. Gyula's daughter herself, Sarolt, had been baptised into the Orthodox Church by the missionary bishop Hierotheos. Sarolt was Géza's wife and mother of Vájk, named Stephen after christening, the future king of Hungarians. It was only in late 10<sup>th</sup> century and early 11<sup>th</sup> century, around the Great Christian Schism (1054), that the Hungarians embraced the Catholic religion that they used as an ideological cloak for their expansion to Transylvania<sup>28</sup>.

From that moment, the Hungarians started to lose, to a great extent, their migratory feature and became somewhat more sedentary, as described in 1147 by Otto of Freising, who was passing through their lands alongside the crusaders<sup>29</sup>.

Western Europe faced a terrible invasion by the Arabs. This Semitic race coming from the Arabian Peninsula got on the move in mid-7<sup>th</sup> century A.D. Their religious doctrine does not provide sufficient elements for us to explain what prompted the Arabs to attack Western Europe. Having succeeded in conquering the divided northern Africa, in 711, el Tariq went to the Iberian Peninsula and subdued it. In 732, the controversial battle of Poitiers<sup>30</sup> relatively put an end to Arabs' advance in Western Europe. It was only after the battle of Roncevaux (15 August 778)<sup>31</sup> that the Arabs were blocked south of the Pyrenees. After this date, they lost their migratory feature and settled down in the Iberian Peninsula. But it was also in those times that the Reconquista began, for the local Christian population could not and would not accept the Mohammedan Arabs' rule.

Another migratory people was that of northern Germanics, known as the Vikings. They separated from the rest of the German world and individualised themselves in the 8<sup>th</sup> century A.D. During that same century they began to expand. At that time the Swedes were interested in colonising the eastern coasts of the

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<sup>28</sup> Cf. Richard Pražák, *The Legends of King Stephen*, in "Hungarian Studies", 1/2 (1985), Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest, p. 163-177, here p. 163; László Veszprémy, *Hungary's Conversion to Christianity: The Establishment of Hungarian Statehood and its Consequences to the Thirteenth Century*, in "Hungarian Studies Review", vol. XXVIII, Nos. 1-2 (2001), pp. 73-92; Pál Engel, *The Realm of St. Stephen: A History of Medieval Hungary, 895-1526*, I. B. Tauris, London-New York, 2005, p. 27 (also translated into Romanian, Engel Pál, *Regatul Sfântului Ștefan. Istoria Ungariei medievale, 895-1526*, ed. II, supervised by Adrian Andrei Rusu and Ioan Drăgan, transl. by Aurora Moga, Editura Mega, Cluj-Napoca, 2011).

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Ottonis episcopi Frisingensis, *Chronica sive Historia de duabus civitatibus*, Herausgegeben von Adolf Hofmeister, in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica - Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum separatim editi*, Hahn, Hanover, 1912, p. 369.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. L. Musset, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, French edition, p. 274.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

Baltic Sea, while the Norwegians wanted to occupy Scotland and Gaul (786-797); a few years later, on the Vandeian Coast, the Danes began hostilities against the Franks in Schleswig, for the latter had come to conquer Saxony. The Swedes penetrated deep into Russia, creating the “route from the Varangians to the Greeks”, and reached the border of the Byzantine Empire. Towards 930, a boundary was established between the two powers and Kiev was founded and controlled by the Varangian family of Rurik.

The Norwegians were especially keen on plundering. They founded small colonies, of 3 or 4 people, a pair family. These colonies went as far as the Gibraltar area.

In turn, the Norwegians had a more organised migration. Their invasions had a more political nature. They took the road of Frisian traders. They followed the rivers, reaching as far as their boats allowed them to.

The Swedish Varangians were mostly interested in money. They obtained it through trade or plunder. They explored the entire European Russia. They had a vocation for creating military colonies in Russia.

In Western Europe, the Vikings indulged in inflicting horrible tortures on the population. They particularly used the “blood eagle punishment”. In 867 they inflicted this torture on King Ella of Northumbria in England<sup>32</sup>.

Only three kings managed to stop the Vikings – Charlemagne, Charles le Chauve and Alfred the Great<sup>33</sup>.

Starting with the 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D. the Vikings and the Varangians ceased their plundering campaigns. The westerners acted wisely. They bought the Varangians’ services and thus calmed them down, for they gave them what they wanted: money. In turn, the Varangians were assimilated by Russians and slavised. As a result, they lost the feature of socially and politically dominant class.

In the 9<sup>th</sup> century, the Turkic peoples of Uzes, Cumans and Pechenegs started their migration towards south-eastern Europe.

The Uzes, less numerous, became known through their cruelty. They formed a base in northern Dobruja. They are remembered due to the lake that was called Uzolimna<sup>34</sup>.

In turn, the Pechenegs settled down in Muntenia and northern Bulgaria. According to Byzantine chroniclers Zonaras, Mihail Pselos and Ana Comnena<sup>35</sup>,

<sup>32</sup> It is not known precisely how long he ruled, he is the main character in the Saga of Ragnar’s son.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. L. Musset, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, French edition, p. 119.

<sup>34</sup> This lake called Uzolimna is mentioned by Ana Comnena in *Alexiada* (cf. *Fontes Historiae Daco-Romanae / Izvoarele istoriei României*, vol. III, *Scritori bizantini* (sec. XI-XIV), publ. by Al. Elian, N. Ș. Tanașoca, Ed. Academiei, București, 1975, pp. 105, 107). To discuss the identification of Lake Uzolimna, see Petre Diaconu, *Les Petchénègues au Bas-Danube*, Ed. Academiei, București, 1970, pp. 66-69, 121-129.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. *Fontes*, vol. III, ed. cit., p. 89.



in the 10<sup>th</sup> century, their chieftains Tatos, Sesthlav and Satzas occupied several cities, among which the legendary fortress Vicina, probably Isaccea of today. In the battle of Lebunion, on 29 April 1091, basileus Alexios I Komnenos (1 August 1081 – 15 August 1118) crushed the Pechenegs. The rest of these people were assimilated by the local population.

The Cumans, related to the Uzes and the Pechenegs, came and settled down in the territory of southern Moldavia, northern Muntenia and Oltenia<sup>36</sup>. To some extent, they also came and settled in Transylvania, but mostly in Hungary. They arrived there because the beautiful queen Elisabeth, wife of Stephen V (1270-1272), was Cuman<sup>37</sup>.

They converted to Christianity, the Catholic faith, at the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, at an unspecified date. It is for them that the papacy set up a diocese of Cumania, whose place has not been identified<sup>38</sup>. Politically speaking the Cumans divided into several areas called White Cumania and Black Cumania.

In 1223, on May 31, the Cumans made the mistake of joining the Russians against the Mongols. During the battle on the Kalka river, the Mongols led by the great Subutai-Bogatur achieved an overwhelming victory. They did not forget about the Cumans' alliance with the Russians. They chased them in order to punish them. They succeeded. On the current territory of Romania, the Cumans were gradually assimilated by the Romanians and left few and disputable traces in onomastics, toponymy and hydrography.

Finally, the last people that closes the great migration is that of Mongols. They had come from the high plateaux of Mongolia and subordinated the Tatars. Thus the two races formed a mass that quickly migrated to Europe. The Mongols were led, in late 11<sup>th</sup> century, by an exceptional commander – Temüjin. He was and is known as Genghis Khan. At the head of his hordes, he set out to conquer Asia and eastern Europe in order to form a huge empire. His political tools were secrecy, the rapid and precise transmission of information, tyranny and extreme cruelty.

In 1205-1211 he conquered China. There he learned how to fight against cities and to use gunpowder. He conquered the north of India and went further, on the Silk Road, subduing Iran. He penetrated into the Russian steppes north of the Black Sea which he subjected after the battle on the Kalka River. He filled the path of his troops, commanded by Subutai-Bogatur, with pyramids made from the heads of those he had killed.

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<sup>36</sup> Ion Donat, Ion Conea, *Contribution à l'étude de la toponymie péchténègue-comane de la Plaine Roumaine du Bas-Danube*, în *Contributions onomastiques publiées à l'occasion du VI-e Congrès International de sciences onomastiques à Munich*, Bucureşti, 1958, pp. 139-169.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Pál Engel, *op. cit.*, p. 109 and the following; Augustin Bunea, *Încercare de istoria românilor până la 1382*, Socec&Co., Bucureşti, 1912, p. 140.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Pál Engel, *op. cit.*, p. 109 and the following; Ioan Ferentz, *Cumanii și episcopia lor*. Tipografia Seminarului Greco-Catolic, Blaj, 1931, pp. 10-11 and passim.

In 1237, the Mongols conquered the great city of Kiev, “mother of Russia”, with armies led by Genghis Khan’s grandson, Batu Khan and Subutai-Bogatur. They went on to central Europe. They entered the Romanian countries. According to the Persian chronicler Reshid-od-Din<sup>39</sup> and French chronicler Philippe Mouskée<sup>40</sup>, the troops of a column of the Mongolian army commanded by Kadan Khan was defeated somewhere on the territory of future Wallachia. Meanwhile, the king of Hungary Béla IV (1235-1270) was overcome by the Mongols on the Sajó<sup>41</sup> river.

Western Europe was terrified by a possible advance of the Mongols. Rutebeuf described the Parisians’ fright which led to preparing an army of knights that was stationed in Bohemia awaiting the Mongols. Through an extraordinary luck there was no fight. This was due to the death of the great Ogodei Khan. Therefore, Batu Khan was forced to cease his advance and return to Karakorum in order to attend the kuriltai (December 1241), otherwise he could not have been elected great khan. So the Mongols retreated from south-eastern Europe.

The Mongols disappeared as a dominant leading people in 1358. It was then that both western and Arab sources mention the disappearance of the last Mongol, i.e. the last representative of the people that had led this wave of the last Asian migration of the Middle Ages. From then on, the Tatars remained the heirs of the empire created by Genghis Khan. On 8 September 1380, near Kulikovo, on the bank of the Don, the knez of Moscow Dmitry Ivanovich (Donskoy) crushed the Tatars once and for all. From that moment, they no longer represented a real danger to Europe or Russia. They crumbled into several political tribal units: the Golden Horde, the White Horde, the Blue Horde, etc. None of these political units would ever stand for anything in Eurasia. One may say that they ended the demographic phenomenon known as the great migration.

We may conclude by stating that the great migration, which had complex causes, had destructive results for the European world. It led to the fall of the greatest, best organised and most prosperous country of the ancient world – the Roman Empire. Barbarian kingdoms had great difficulties in rising on the ruins of the Roman state. The newly created kingdoms that had emerged in Europe made full use of what the Romans had accomplished. To some extent, this legacy was enriched by the Christian church. We have used “to some extent” because the Christian church was based on the Judaic philosophy which, in the 1<sup>st</sup> century A.D., was at a lower stage as compared to the Greek philosophy of Plato and later of that of the Alexandrian school represented by Plotinus, in particular. The great migration, however, may have had some positive effects in the historical

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<sup>39</sup> Cf. Aurel Decei, *Relații româno-orientale*, Ed. Academiei, București, 1978, p. 205.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Radu Ștefan Ciobanu (Vergatti), *Știri despre români la Philippe Mouskées, cronicar orășean francez din secolul al XIII-lea*, in “Muzeul Național”, III/1976, pp. 246-256.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Pál Engel, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

dynamics, for it contributed to the birth of the new European peoples. While in western Europe the new element in the creation of modern peoples was represented by the Germanic races, in eastern and south-eastern Europe the Slavs were the basis which led to the emergence of some of the modern peoples. Even in the case of Romanians, an island of eastern Latinity, the Slavs had an important role in the formation of the people of today. Nevertheless, one should not forget a less discussed fact: a great part of the migration occurred peacefully with migratory people penetrating into the Roman Empire where the newcomers were used as labour force. But those inside were just as destructive as the warriors coming from outside, for they too contributed to the barbarisation and dismantling of the Roman Empire. This situation is maybe similar to what happens in Europe today, with a great wave of migrants invading the continent and threatening to continue doing so, as it happened in the Roman Empire in the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries.

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