



INTRODUCTION OF THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL LIFE OF THE CENTRAL ASIAN PEOPLES IN EARLY MIDDLE AGES BYZANTINE SOURCES

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ANNOTATION

This article analyzes the socio-economic and cultural life of the peoples of Central Asia in the early Middle Ages of the works of Byzantine historians on the basis of data collected by Byzantine travelers who traveled in Central Asia during this period.

Key words and phrases: Central Asia, socio-economic, Byzantine sources, "Romano", Khaganate, early middle ages, "land of the Khaalites", Eastern Europe, Zoroastrianism, nestorians and monophysites.

In addition to written sources in Chinese, Sogdian, Arabic, Persian, ancient Turkic, Assyrian, Armenian, Pahlavi, and other languages, Byzantine sources written in Greek are important to illuminate the early medieval history of the peoples of Central Asia. In contrast to written sources in Armenian, Assyrian, and Hindi Byzantine sources are more important in clearing up the socio-economic and cultural life of the peoples of Central Asia in the Early Middle Ages, as they were written not on the basis of narrations but on the basis of realities witnessed by ambassadors and tourists.

It should be noted that between 560 and 630, Byzantine ambassadors such as Zemarkh and Andrei presented the proposals of the Byzantine emperors on the struggle against the Sassanid Iran in alliance with the Khaganate.), information about turkish khagans Mугan (553-572), Istami Yabgu (552-576), Tardu Khagan (576-583; 600-603) or Tun Yabgu-Khagan (628-630) are found in Chinese and Byzantine sources [1] and complement each other. Ancient Turkic Orkhon inscriptions which shed light on the history of the Turkish Khaganate provide a brief account of these connections referring to ambassadors from Purum (Byzantium) [2]. It turns out that just as the Byzantines were well acquainted with Central Asia in the early Middle Ages, so were the Central Asians who studied Byzantium closely. This is confirmed by the fact that the term one of the ethno-political



names of Byzantium at that time "Greek" was used in the ancient Turkic language as "Purum".

First of all, it should be noted that the information provided by the Byzantine authors is mainly related to the political realities of Central Asia and only in some cases they focus on the socio-economic and cultural situation of the peoples of the region. Furthermore, most Byzantine sources reflect the political processes that took place in part within the Hephthalite state (420-565) and mainly within the Turkish Khaganate (562-744). In particular, Byzantine sources have a special place [3] in studying the history of the Khaganate, especially to clear up the history of its diplomatic relations. Byzantium was also an ally of the Khaganate in the early years of its existence and had diplomatic relations with it for many years. In particular, in 568–626, that is, for almost fifty years, visit of Byzantine ambassadors to the territory of the Western Turkic Khaganate-Yettisuv and meetings with the Khagans gave Byzantine authors a chance to get acquainted with the events taking place in the Khaganate, as well as with information about its socio-political and cultural life. Specifically, Byzantine historians such as Menander (late 6th century), Theophanes (early 7th century), Theophilic Simokatta (first half of the 7th century) cited information about the Khaganate in their writings using the messages provided by these ambassadors, they reflected the realities in their works [4].

Some of these authors, Theophilic Simokatta, Theophanes, Nikifor (VIII-IX), were more or less aware of the situation not only in the territory of Byzantium and its environs, but also in the farthest conditions of the peoples of Central Asia.

It is obvious that Byzantine historians also focused on Central Asia and its environs in the Middle Ages. However, the reports in these states were not as detailed and precise as those of the authors of the ancient period.

Byzantine-Greek authors often did not know the composition of the peoples and tribes of the East as a result often used the historical terms "massagets", "Scythians", "Sogdians", "unns" (Huns) [5] in reference to these peoples, although it is clear from the content of many data that in some cases it was about this or that Turkic tribe.

Byzantine historians, such as Procopius (sixth century), wrote that "*they (the Hephthalites) were of the Huns, and their bodies were white*" [6]. Information about the white hun namely the Hephthalites, is also found in Indian sources [7].



Among the Byzantine historians, Ammian Martsellin, Prisk Paniysky, Procopius, Agafi, and Theophilact Simokatta wrote in their works about the Hephthalites who lived on the northeastern border of Iran and equated them with the Xionians and Kidarians. The Xionians and Kidarites are also a group of hun peoples who lived between the Tianshan and Altai Mountains before establishing their dynasty in the southern regions of Central Asia, and nomadic traditions dominated their economic life.

Byzantine sources state that the Hephthalite ambassadors to Byzantium in 568 completely destroyed the Hephthalites and it is emphasized that the territories under his control passed into their (khaganate) jurisdiction[8]. These sources also briefly state that when the Byzantine ambassadors visited the Turkish khaganate in the late 560s and 570s and returned, the vassal kingdoms also applied to the khanate for permission to send an ambassador to Byzantium, it is noted that the Turkish khan allowed only the Khoalit or Khvalis to send envoys from the existing vassals (rulers), [9] and a number of scholars did not clarify on which people or kingdom in Central Asia was understood under this term. Based on information recorded by the Byzantine ambassador Zemarkh (VI century), P.I. Lerx and N.I. The Veselovskys consider the Hephthalites to be a Central Asian (Khorezmian) people. According to them, "*land of the Khoalits*" as noted by the ambassador equated to Khorezm, connecting the medieval city of Kerder with the state of Kidar, and on this basis can be led them to the Hephthalites [10].

Although the people of the northern and northeastern parts of the region, east of the Syrdarya river, are mentioned as nomadic, Byzantine authors note that the Turks were aware of the presence of cities in and around Talas (Taroz), as well as the dominance of the Turks in the area between the Amudarya and Syrdarya [11]. The following information from the Byzantine historian Theophylact Simokatta (7th century) is noteworthy:

"This mountain (Altai or Tianshan-Sh.T.) is situated facing to east and is called "gold" by the locals because it is rich in fruits: it is also rich in wildlife and horses. According to a Turkish law, Altintog was left to the discretion of the chief khagan. The Turkish people are proud of two important things: they say that since time immemorial, since the beginning of their lives, they have never seen cholera on their land, and earthquakes have been rare in their country. Bakaf (city) which once built by ungurs was destroyed in an earthquake and Sogdiana suffered from both cholera and the earthquake..." [12].



Based on this information, it is understood that the use of horses and livestock (bulls, small cattle) was a priority in the economic life of the ancient Turks, as well as the consumption of fruits played essential role in their life. In particular, the abundance of fruits in the mountains and foothills, and the fact that such places are revered by the Turks, attracted the attention of the Byzantine ambassadors.

In another passage from Theophylact Simokatta: *"The Turks place fire above all else, glorify water and air, sing hymns to the earth, and worship only the Creator of heaven and earth, calling him 'god' . They will sacrifice horses, bulls, and small animals to him, and will appoint for themselves priests who, in their opinion, foretell the future"* [13]. From this information it is clear that in the early Middle Ages the peoples of Central Asia, especially the Turks, believed in the divinity, that the chief deity was called "god", that fire, water, air, earth (earth) were considered sacred and sacrifices were made to them, that a special religious leader, a "priest," a shaman, led the congregation in performing such ceremonies. At the same time, these data show that the ancient Turks were well aware of Zoroastrianism, one of the leading religious systems in the region.

It should be noted that in Byzantine sources the toponym "Turkey" was found in connection with the region, under which Theophanes and the early medieval Greeks called the lands inhabited by the Turkic Khaganate and Turkic tribes, ie Central Asia. Thus, in the VI-VIII centuries the term "Turkey" was used for Central Asia and it is assumed that the Persian word "Turkistan" was Greekized [14].

Thus, Byzantine historians and chroniclers, who wrote their works in Greek (Greek), focused on the way of life, economy, cultural and everyday life of the peoples of Central Asia, focusing on clarifying the political processes in the region.

According to Byzantine sources, most of the peoples of the region were Turks and minority Sogdians in the Early Middle Ages.

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