

ART OF SIEGE AMONG THE KIPCHAKS

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Abstract: This article is devoted to the history of art of siege among the Kipchaks. The Kipchaks possessed the basic skills of besieging cities. They could take small towns as a result of a long blockade or a surprise attack. The Kipchaks could capture large cities only together with their allies. Ruthenians, Georgians, and Bulgarians were such allies. An attempt to use catapults of the Tir-i Charkh type is recorded in 1184. The Kipchaks hired a Khorezm specialist in the art of siege.

Keywords: *Kipchaks, art of Siege, siege of cities, Tir-i Charkh catapult, Bulgarians, Georgians*

One of the complex issues in the Kipchaks history is related to the development of the art of siege among the Kipchaks. Unfortunately, until now this aspect has been of little interest for researchers. It is necessary to answer the question of whether the siege skills of the nomads evolved and what equipment they used.

In the case of an enemy attack, the nomads defended themselves in a camp of carts (tabor). This was recorded by Michael the Syrian. In such a camp the Pechenegs defended themselves from the Romans and Kipchaks in the Battle of Levunion. In order to storm camps, nomads had to have basic siege skills. The camp was to be bombarded with both conventional and incendiary arrows. It was also important to open the wall of carts in order to break into the enemy's camp [Anna Komnena (1965): book 8, paragraphs 4–6; Marquart 2002].

Very little is known about sieges among nomads. In order to get an idea of the skills of the Kipchaks during sieges, it is necessary to analyze data from sources about their campaigns. In 1068, the Kipchaks fought near Chernigov without even making an attempt to take the city. In 1070 it was reported that the Kipchaks fought near Rostovets and Neyatin. In 1079, Prince Roman led the Kipchaks to the Warrior, but they did not take the city. Thus, even small cities could withstand the raids of the Kipchaks [Ипатьевская (1962): 161, 164, 195].

Typologically similar to these campaigns was the Kipchak campaign against Hungary in 1091, carried out by duke (prince) Kopulkh, son of Krul (Kol). During this campaign, the Kipchaks devastated Transylvania. They reached the city of Bechei (Old Bechei on Tisza). However, the Kipchaks were defeated in the battles of Paganti (Poganch stream) and near the Danube. The Kipchaks did not take a single city. The earlier campaigns of the Pechenegs in 1068 (or 1071) and 1085 were also unsuccessful. [Shusharin (1997): 327–328; Scriptorum Rerum Hungaricarum (1776): 196–197;

Chronicon pictum 1883, 163-164]. Feeling the weakness of the Romans, the Kipchaks supported the rebellion of the Pseudo-Roman Diogenes in 1095, which, although defeated, showed the danger the nomads posed to the Byzantine Empire. The impostor was supported by the Wallachians, who let the Kipchaks through the mountain passes [Anna Komnena (1965): book 10, paragraphs 2–4; Litavrin (1960): 422].

At the end of the 11th century, the situation for the Kievan Rus' became more complicated. In 1093, the Kipchaks defeated the army of Svyatopolk on the Stugna River and crossed the rampart built by the Ruthenians near the camp. After the defeat, Svyatopolk hid from the Kipchaks in the city of Trepolye, which they could not take. Then they, having besieged Torchesk, made an attempt to take possession of the city. But, as the chronicler pointed out, the Torqs (Oghuzs) repelled the assault of the Kipchaks and inflicted significant losses on the enemy. After an unsuccessful assault, the Kipchaks switched to a blockade and cut off the city garrison from the water. The defenders, suffering from thirst and hunger, asked Svyatopolk to release the city. The attempt to do this was a failure. The Kipchaks defeated the the Ruthenians and drove them to Trypillya and Kyiv. In 1095, the residents of Yuryev did not wait for the siege, like the Torci near Sakov, and moved to the north. The Kipchak attempt to take control of large cities in 1096 was unsuccessful. Bonyak tried to “expel” (on the move) get Kyiv, but the guards responded to the threat in time and did not allow the Kipchaks to break into the city. Tugorkan besieged the city of Pereyaslav, but it withstood the siege, and the troops of Vladimir Monomakh and Svyatopolk arrived in time and released the city. Tugorkan died during the battle of Pereyaslav. Bonyak, not receiving Kyiv, took revenge on the Rus by devastating the monasteries near the city. The Kipchaks burned the monastery in Stefanova village, devastated the settlement of Germanich and cut down the gates in the Pechersky monastery [Ипатъевская (1962): 211-213, 219, 221-224].

A. Bazhenov points out that at the end of the 11th century, the lands of Middle Transnistria were attacked by nomads. As a result of an unexpected raid, the Glybovskoe settlement was captured and burned. The settlements of Derazhnya Gatna, Kutkovtsy, and Kolubovtsy ceased to exist. The previous defense system, effective against the Pechenegs, was unable to withstand the Kipchaks. The main culprit of these destructions was Bonyak. His image was preserved in Podolian legends as “Bonyak Solodivy (Bonyak Sheludivy)” [Баженов (2009): 159–160]. In the 12th century, the chronicler recorded the settlements of Vasiliev, Onut, Kalius, Ushitsa and Kuchelmin on the territory of Transnistria (the settlement of Galitsa in the Sokiryansky district of the Chernivtsi region) [Котляр (1998): 143-149; Кудряшов (1948): 127; Баженов (2009): 94-97].

The capital of the Galician Poryzzya became Bakota, around which there were settlements in the villages of Braga, Bolshaya Slobodka, Vrubovtsy, Grinchuk, Loevskoye. Six private castles and two princely fortresses were built [Баженов (2009): 96–99]. The new fortresses turned out to be more powerful than the old ones. In 1159, Ivan Berladnik and the Kipchak Khan Bashkord were unable to take the city of Ushitsa. In 1205, Rurik, together with the Kipchaks, was defeated by Mikulin. In 1228, Vladimir Rurikovich, together with Mikhail Vsevolodovich and the Kipchaks, besieged Kamenets, but were unable to take it [Баженов (2009): 169-176]. During the Kipchak expansion of

the 1090s, the Kipchaks had the strength to besiege small cities and overcome fortification lines.

The retaliatory campaigns of the Ruthenians slowed down the expansion of the Kipchaks, who returned to the traditional tactics of quick raids. In 1105, Bonyak's troops attacked Zarub. In the battle that took place, he defeated the Torks and Berendeys [Прицак 2008, 41; Плетнева 1990, 56; Kurat (1972): 83; Ипатьевская (1962): 257; Расовский (1940): 110]. The following year, the Urusobichs attacked Zarechesk on the Kiev-Volyn border [Прицак 2009, 41; Плетнева (1990): 56; Kurat (1972): 83; Spinei (2009): 124; Лаврентьевская (1962): 281; Ипатьевская (1962): 257; Расовский (1940): 110]. A battle took place near the Sula River in 1106 or 1107, where Bonyak's brother Taz died [Прицак (2008): 41-42; Плетнева (1990): 60-61; Kurat (1972): 83; (Gökbel 2002): 649; Лаврентьевская (1962): 281-282; Ипатьевская (1962): 258-259; Расовский (1940): 110]. In 1116 Bonyak attacked the city of Ksnyatin [Плетнева (1990): 64]. In 1125, Mstislav Vladimirovich repelled a Kipchak raid on Baruch and pursued them to Polksoten [Ипатьевская (1962): 289-290; Лаврентьевская (1962): 295-296; Расовский (1940): 114]. The princes of Rus' organized an effective fortification system. The Ruthenians quickly reacted to the invasion, and vigilantes came to their aid.

Konchak's first campaigns against Rus' had the nature of raids. It was first mentioned in 1172 [Ипатьевская (1962): 548]. In addition to the actions near Ksnyatin, the Donetsk Kipchaks made a campaign against the Pereyaslavl land and approached the city of Pesochen [Ипатьевская (1962): 548, 555]. In 1174, Konchak, together with Kobyak, made a campaign, plundering the outskirts of Serebryany and Baruch, and when the army of the Seversky prince Igor Svyatoslavich approached them, the nomads retreated beyond the Vorskla, avoiding the battle [Плетнева (1990): 157; Kurat (1972): 85-86; Gökbel (2002): 649; Ипатьевская (1962): 568-570]. The campaign of 1179 was directed against Pereyaslav, but the Kipchaks did not besiege the city [Gökbel (2002): 649; Плетнева (1990): 157; Ипатьевская (1962): 612-613].

In 1177, the Kipchaks made a campaign against Kyiv and took six towns of the Berendeys [Ипатьевская (1962): 603-605]. This was the beginning of a new era in the history of Kipchak military affairs. The Kipchak khans thought about using more complex technologies to take cities. In 1184, Konchak was preparing for a campaign against Rus'. He specially invited some "busurmenin" to build siege equipment, and he even built some kind of machine, which the Slavs called "shereshir" in "The Tale of Igor's Campaign." In Farsi this siege weapon was called "tir-i charkh". This siege engine was a ballista that used ignited oil to destroy fortifications. In the Galicia-Volyn Chronicle it is mentioned that the "busurmenin" had "living fire". The chronicler highly appreciated the significance of the presence of this person among the Kipchaks. He reported that Konchak wanted to take the cities of the Rus and burn them. However, the Ruthenians learned in advance about the plans of the Kipchaks and, in order to destroy them, carried out a raid on Khorol. Konchak was forced to flee, and the "Busurmenin" was captured. As for the ethnicity of the Muslim military instructor, O. Pritsak believed that he was an Iranian-speaking Khorezmian. As for the origin of the oil, the Ukrainian researcher suggested that the oil could have come from the Taman Peninsula. This was not the so-called "Greek fire", the origin and use of which was kept secret by the Romans. This was another, now Muslim development. It is likely that a Muslim

instructor could get to Dasht-i Kipchak from the Middle East or Central Asia (from Khorezm) through Saksin (a country in the Lower Volga region) [Прицак (2008): 91–98; Плетнева (1990): 159; Kurat (1972): 86; Gökbel (2002): 649; Ипатьевская (1962): 634–636].

After 1184, the Galician-Volyn chronicler no longer spoke of a significant danger to Rus'. However, Igor's defeat in the Battle of Kayal opened up the possibility for the Kipchaks to devastate the border regions. The Burj-Ogly troops moved to the cities of Poseymye. Gza approached Putivl and even took a fortress-near this city. The Kipchak leader never dared to besiege the capital of the Seversk land. The troops of the Donetsk Kipchaks devastated the borderlands of the Pereyaslav principality and the region up to Pereyaslav. However, Konchak never dared to besiege Pereyaslav. It was noted that the inhabitants of the city of Rimov died in the battle with the Kipchaks in 1185. They were destroyed by Polovtsian sabers. The Kipchaks stormed several fortresses of the Sivershchina land. The unsuccessful campaign of Igor Svyatoslavich deprived the garrisons of the cities of the support of the princely army, which fell in the battle of Kayal. There was no way to get help for the besieged. The description of the siege of Rimov indicates that the defenders were on the fences. Therefore, it can be assumed that the Rimov garrison repelled the Kipchak assault. However, the ongoing siege had a negative impact on the city's defenders. Part of the garrison fled due to the swamps located near the city. Those who remained in the city could not withstand the new assault by the Kipchaks. The assault was successful, and the Kipchaks captured the city and destroyed its defenders. In 1187, the Kipchaks fought with the Rusyns on the river Ros and in the Chernigov borderland, however, they did not achieve success. The warriors of the princes came to the aid of the garrisons of the cities in time [Плетнева (1990): 165–166; Ипатьевская (1962): 646–648; Прицак (2008): 118–122].

After the failures in Rus', they began to put even more active pressure on the Roman fortifications on the Danube border. In 1114, the Kipchaks attacked the city of Vidin [Stoyanow 2002, 682; Diaconu 1978, 59]. A terrible warning was the capture of the city of Garvan in Dobrudja by the Pechenegs and Berendeys. This happened in 1122 [Гръцки извори (1968): 209–210; Маркварт (2002); Diaconu (1978): 62–71]. In 1148, the Kurchaks attacked Dristra (Silistria) [Бибииков (1981): 117; Гръцки извори (1968): 226–227; Гръцки извори (1972): 226–227; Расовский (1940): 120]. The next campaign took place in 1160. According to John Kinnam, the Kipchaks attacked the Byzantine borderland when Manuel was on a campaign against the Rumian Turks. As a result of this attack, the basileus (emperor) was forced to return to Europe, but when the nomads learned about the advance of his troops to the Danube, they retreated back to the steppes [Бибииков (1981): 121; Гръцки извори (1968): 247; Расовский (1940): 124]. If in 1114 the Vidin garrison managed to fight off the Kipchaks, then in 1148 and 1160. the garrisons of the Danube fortresses needed the help of the emperor's troops to hold the border. The Hungarian king Endre II in 1211 was forced to give the land of Bartsa as fief to the Teutonic knights. The old system of Hungarian bins (gyepu) could no longer stop the Kipchak invasions. Obviously, the Kipchaks stormed Hungarian fortresses as well as insignificant Russian towns [Папаска (1981): 16; Vasary (2005): 32; Spinei (2008): 417; Пашуто (2011): 575]. Before the Crusaders moved to this region, the Kipchaks devastated the lands of the counties of Brasov and Fegheras [Vasary 2005, 32; Spinei

1986, 49]. By charter of the king in 1212, the Teutons were given lands south of the Tatar Pass. The Teutons were offered to expand their possessions at the expense of the lands between Bulgaria and the Brodniki [Шушарин (1978): 41]. The documents of the diplomatic correspondence between Endre II and Pope Honorius III noted that the pagans were attacking the land of Bartz and “the land beyond the snow-capped mountains” [Шушарин 1978, 41–42]. In the summer, the Kipchaks approached the Carpathian Mountains, and it was then that their attacks on the Hungarian border area could occur [Шушарин (1978): 44]. The Teutons were not only able to repel the attacks of the nomads for several years, but also launched a counter-offensive. The knights conquered some areas near Bartsashag in the possessions of the Kipchaks and Brodniks. The Teutons were able to successfully fight the Kipchaks by building fortifications. They built several settlements such as Brasov (Kronstadt) and Kreuzburg. The Kipchaks could not oppose anything to the German castles [Князький (1988): 26; Spinei (2008): 575–576; Spinei (1986): 49].

However, the nomads had the opportunity to take cities together with their allies. In this regard, the wars of the Kipchaks with the Romans and the Latin Empire are indicative. The largest invasion of the Kipchaks and Vlachs into the Byzantine possessions in history was the campaign in Thrace in 1199 - 1200. [Vasary (2005): 48–49; Иречек (1878): 310; Успенский (1879): 207–209; Diaconu (1978): 130; Spinei (1986): 47]. According to the dating of M. Bibikov, in 1199 the Wallachians and Kipchaks occupied all the Thracian cities that were located between Mesina and Tsurul. On April 23, the army of Bulgarians, Vlachs and Kipchaks approached Constantinople. In the fall of 1199 and spring of 1200, the Kipchaks were near Plovdiv (Philippol) [Бибииков (1981): 126; Расовский (2012): 234]. An event of world significance was the Battle of Adrianople (1205). It is known according to Robert de Clary, Geoffroy de Villehardouin, Niketas Choniates, Nikephoros Gregoras, George Acropolite [Geoffroy de Villehardouin (1993): chapters 354–361; Robert de Clary (1986): chapter 112; Nikita Choniates (1862); Nikifor Grigora (1862): 19–20; George Acropolis (1863): 26]. In it, the allied Bulgarian-Kypchak army defeated the crusaders [Vasary (2005): 50; Успенский (1879): 131–132; Diaconu (1978): 247–249; Иречек (1878): 320; Расовский (2012): 234–235]. After this, the Bulgarians and Hairs, together with the Kipchaks, took the cities of Verroya, Ruzia, Apros, Perinth, Daonia, Arkadiopol, Messina, Tsurul, Afira [Nikita Choniates (1862)].

The Kipchaks took part in the Bulgarian campaigns in Thrace and Macedonia in 1205 - 1207, as well as in the siege of Thessalonica (1207). Kipchak warriors were in the army of the Bulgarian king Kaloyan in January and February 1206. However, during the campaign of 1207 they also acted in the spring. Thessalonica could not be taken quickly, the war continued until mid-April 1207. The Kypchaks could not stay in the Asenid army for a very long time and were forced to retreat [Robert de Clary (1986): chapter 116; Geoffroy de Villehardouin (1993): chapters 386–389, 399, 404–410, 417–421, 461–475; Nikifor Grigora (1862): 23–26; Nikita Choniates (1862); Князький (1988): 25; Успенский (1879): 254–255; Vasary (2005): 51–53; Иречек (1878): 323–325; Расовский (1940): 232–236; Расовский (2012): 684; Diaconu (1978): 133]. They acted as auxiliary troops during the siege of Tsurul in 1239 [Vasary (2005): 63; George Acropolis (1863): 60–61].

The Kipchaks also distinguished themselves in the Caucasus. With their help, the city of Tbilisi was liberated in 1122 [Anchabadze (1980): 342; Golden (1984): 73; Golden (2001): 48]. An-Nasawi pointed out that in 1227 Emir Jalal ad-Din managed to negotiate an alliance with Khan Gyurge (Gurka, Gur Khan). The latter can be identified with Yuri Konchakovich (i.e. Yuri Konchakovich). The Khorezme and Kipchaks tried to get Derbent. However, the Emir of Derbent still defended the city [Marquart (2002); Насави (1996): chapter 77].

To better understand the development of art of siege among the Kipchaks, it is necessary to compare their military art in the field of obtaining cities with examples from the history of other nomadic peoples. Data from archaeological research indicate that the Pechenegs took the fortifications of the Tivertsi - a settlement between the Dniester and Reut. Under pressure from the Pechenegs, part of the Tivertsi migrated to the lands of the White Croats. However, even Rus' itself during the reign of Prince Vladimir found it difficult to cope with their raids. In 969, the Pechenegs besieged Kyiv, in 992 - Pereyaslav, in 994 - Belgorod, in 996 - Vasilkov. To protect his possessions from the Pechenegs, Vladimir built lines of fortifications. He built fortifications along the Stugna on the Dnieper Right Bank, and on the Dnieper Left Bank along the Desna, Ostro, Trubezh and Sula. The fortification lines built by Vladimir Svyatoslavich and Yaroslav Vladimirovich became an obstacle to Pecheneg raids and pushed the border to Sula and Ros, securing Kyiv and Chernigov. With the help of the inhabitants of the Paradunavon region and the Paulicians (heretic Bohumils), the Pechenegs took possession of the cities of the Romans in the second half of the 11th century. [ПВЛ; Spinei (2009): 85-92, 97, 107-118; Кудряшов (1948): 128-129, 134-136; Котляр (1998): 127, 142; Баженов (2009): 94-99].

As for the Khazar fortifications, the Pechenegs were able to overcome them during the civil war in the Khazar Kaganate. The taking of Khazar territories by the Oguzes can be explained by the fact that after the war with Svyatoslav Igorevich, the Khazar state was in crisis, and the Rusyns took possession of key fortresses - Sarkel (White Tower) and Samkerts (Tmutarakan) [Прицак, Голб (2003), 140-141, 158; Білецький (2008), 23-30; Hudud al-Alam (1937), глава 47; Spinei (2009), 51]. The Pechenegs took control of the settlement on the Seversky Donets. The local population accepted the power of the Pechenegs. The decline of the Khazar settlements (X - XI centuries) occurred during the expansion of the Oguzes. The time of construction of the Khazar fortresses (the first half of the 9th century) indicates that the first opponents against whom the Khazars built fortresses were the Hungarians. Sarkel was built when the Hungarians appeared in the Black Sea steppes. According to Arab and Persian sources, the Magyars raided the Slavs, took tribute from them and captured them as slaves. The Slavs defended themselves from attacks by the Magyars by building fortresses. Gardizi and Ibn Ruste reported that the Magyars were attacking the Sakaliba. Similar evidence was given by Tahir al-Marwazi, reporting on the Magyars' raids on the Rus and the Sakaliba (as in the source) [Круглов (2003): 27-29, 49-58; Артамонов (2001): 391-432; Ипатьевская (1962): 17-18; Ибн Русте (2006): 703; Тахир Марвази (2006): 708; Гардизи (1973); ПВЛ].

Nomads could also acquire fortifications that were considered impregnable. Thus, the Turkuts took the city of Chora (Derbent). The Türkuts and Avars could use complex siege engines. In particular, it is known that the Avars used siege equipment when trying

to take control of Constantinople. The Avars mastered polyorhetics thanks to the help of captured Byzantine engineers. They learned the art of siege at the end of the 6th century. Theophanes the Byzantine reported that the mechanic Busa from the city of Aporia was captured by the Avars. He suggested how to build a siege machine called a “ram.” After the devastation of Caucasian Albania, the Turkuts broke into Iveria. The Turkuts failed to take Tbilisi straight away, but after two months of siege they took possession of the city. The description of the siege indirectly indicates that the Turkuts gained control of the city walls with the help of siege towers. The Sogdians could have introduced this technique to the Turkuts [Феофан Византиец (2005): 231; Мовсес Каланкаутаци (1984): XI, XII, XIV].

The nomads adopted the achievements of the art of siege from their neighbors. As to what siege devices the Pechenegs, Oguzes and Hungarians could use, the example of the Savirs can indicate. The Savirs, like other nomads, initially raided the border provinces. However, after some time they mastered the skills of besieging cities. Apparently, they were taught this by captured Romans [Артамонов (2001): 97–102]. As for the Turko-Bulgars, we do not have sufficient information about the existence of the art of siege in individual Turko-Bulgar tribes. The first data on complex machines date back to the 9th century. The captive Arab and the Byzantine mechanic Eumatius went into the service of the Bulgarian king Krum, who taught polyorhetics to the Turkic-Bulgars. With the help of siege engines, the Turko-Bulgars gained Mesemvria and Adrianople. And even after the “conquest of their homeland,” the Magyars acquired more complex machines, and in 954 they made an attempt to take possession of Augsburg, but were driven away from the city by the Germans [Фехер (1938): 56–57; Измайлов (2008): 87-94, 144-154]. It should be noted that a similar picture can be observed among the European Huns. In the 4th century. They counted on the speed of the attack, then under Attila the Huns developed polyorhetics in such a way that not a single city with stone walls could resist them. The Huns used rams and catapults during the siege. They were made by prisoners and renegades from the Romans. Attila used all types of throwing machines during the siege of Aquileia [Никоноров, Худяков 2004, 274–280]. The polyorhetics of the Kipchaks remained at the level of the early nomadic Magyars and Pechenegs. The Mongols had the most advanced polyorchetics [Храпачевский 2004, 209-257].

After conducting the research, we came to the following conclusions: The Kipchaks possessed the basic skills of besieging cities. They could take small towns as a result of a long blockade or a surprise attack. The Kipchaks could capture large cities only together with their allies. Ruthenians, Georgians, and Bulgarians were such allies. An attempt to use catapults of the Tir-i Charkh type is recorded in 1184. The Kipchaks hired a Khorezm specialist in the art of siege.

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