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THE HUNS AND THE GREAT MIGRATION IN EUROPE

Abstract

The IV-VII centuries entered the history of Eurasia and Europe as the era of the Great Migration. The current isolation of the Great Migration as a transitional historical period is especially important. It allows not only an investigation of the specific history of the Great Migration as it mostly is in the historical literature but also proves that the Great Migration was a turning point in world history. It started with the Huns' union of tribes from the depths of Central Asia and culminated with the invasion of the west of the European continent. Since that time we have seen the synthesis and the integration of social relationships, cultures and traditions of tribes and peoples in the Eurasian space.

Keywords: the Great Migration, Huns, Roman Empire, civilization.

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ЕУРОПАДАҒЫ ҒҰНДАР ЖӘНЕ ХАЛЫҚТАРДЫҢ ҰЛЫ ҚОНЫС АУДАРУЫ

Аңдатпа

IV-VII ғасырлар Еуразия, Еуропаның тарихына Ұлы қоныс аудару кезеңі ретінде енді. Ұлы қоныс аудару кезеңінің қазіргі уақытта өтпелі тарихи кезең ретінде бөлі көрсету ерекше маңыздылыққа ие. Ол Ұлы қоныс аудару дүниежүзі тарихындағы бетбұрыстық дәуір болғандығын дәлелдейді. Бұл қоныс аудару үдерісін ғұндар Орталық Азияның аумағынан еуропалық құрлықтың батысына қарай қозғалысы арқылы негізін қалағандығын дәлелдей түседі.

Кілт сөздер: Ұлы қоныс аудару, ғұндар, Рим империясы, өркениет.

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ГУННЫ И ВЕЛИКОЕ ПЕРЕСЕЛЕНИЕ НАРОДОВ В ЕВРОПЕ

Аннотация

IV-VII вв. вошли в историю Евразии, Европы как эпоха Великого переселения народов. Выделение Великого переселения народов в качестве переходной исторической эпохи в настоящее время представляет особую важность. Оно позволяет не только исследовать конкретную историю Великого переселения, какой она в основном и является в исторической литературе. Она доказывает что Великое переселение народов явилось переломным этапом во всемирной истории, начало которому положил именно гуннский союз племен своим продвижением из глубин Центральной Азии на запад европейского континента.

Ключевые слова: Великое переселение народов, гунны, Римская империя, цивилизация.

Introduction

The Great Migration of peoples in IV-VII centuries was a turning point in world history. It was started by the Hun's tribal alliance and their movement from the depths of Central Asia to Europe. We now have some opportunities to study the history of the belief system of the Great Migrations. At the turn of classical antiquity and during the Middle Ages there was a move, not only of tribes and nations. In addition, knowledge and understanding of the various tribes and peoples "came to life" and intensified.

These four centuries correspond to the peak of migration, when the Huns captured almost the entire continent, and radically changed its political, ethnic and cultural character. This is the period of the death of ancient foundations and orders, and the formation of new social relationships and a new civilization - a civilization of the middle ages.

At the same time, we had to pay an attention that even before the European resettlement and the migration of the Huns took place comment can be made about the Germans. The earliest ancient source on the middle and northern European regions are the messages of Pytheas from Massalia (IV c. BC), Greek author, and a student of Aristotle. Pytheas first stressed the difference between the Celts and the Scythians (Skythen) and gave evidence of the lands and their inhabitants, who were later called the Germans [1].

The ancestral home of the tribes, who later called themselves "Germans" ("Germani"), includes south Scandinavia, Denmark and what is now North Germany and Baltic Sea area. In V.BC, their southern advance went as far as the Harz Mountains and the River Saale, a tributary of the Elbe. This was when the Germans came into conflict with the Celts [2].

Subsequently, from the beginning of our era, Germanic tribal unions were in constant flux, and the tribes were involved in clashes with the Roman Empire. This can be thought of as the most important and defining period of the Great Migration. The apogee of this migration was the Huns' movement from east to west across the Eurasian continent.

The objective of this article is to show that the Great Migration of peoples resulting from the Hun invasion was a turning point in world history.

The research methods reported in this paper are based on the use of rare sources written in Latin, Greek, Early German and Scandinavian. Among the valuable sources of the period, in addition to the chronicles and related materials, are the archives which hold the papal correspondence, which, unfortunately, has not been the subject of a proper analysis, certainly not in the case of researchers in Soviet Russia.

Thus, in a letter to Emperor Marcian of the Eastern Roman Empire (450-457 AD) on April 23, 451 AD, Pope Leo I the Great (440-461 AD) made it clear that the consent of the two Christian emperors of the East and the West would be needed to resist the encroachments of the heretical Barbarian invaders ("nam inter principes Christianos spiritu dei confirmante concordiam gemina per totum mundum fiducia roboratur, quia profectus caritatis et fidei utrorumque armorum potentiam insuperabilem facit, ut propitiato per unam confessionem deo simul et haeretica falsitae et barbara destruat hostilitas...") [3].

In Soviet historiography, the history of the Huns in Europe has been little studied, except for a brief consideration of some characteristics [4].

In European science to the general Hun's history devoted the works of several authors as Weber [5] and Pirenne [6].

In Kazakh historiography, the Huns have been the subject of a number of publications of Professor Zhumagulov [7].

Attila and the migration of Hun tribes

Since ancient times, the Huns (Hunnoi) had inhabited Central Asia. They belonged to the Turkic tribes. As far back as IV.BC, the Chinese called the Huns their most serious opponents. Hun chieftains made real progress in the wars with the Han Empire.

In the first century AD, the migration of the Hun tribes took place into the territory of Kazakhstan and other regions of western Central Asia. In the middle of IV BC, the Huns invaded the land between the Volga and the Don. Having conquered the Alans in the Northern Caucasus, and subordinated the kingdom of Bosphorus, they crossed the Don, and crushed the multi-tribal power of the Ostrogothic King Ermanarih in South-Eastern Europe (375 AD). This year was the beginning of a series of movements that led to the Great Migrations in Eurasia and Europe.

In 376 AD the Visigoths, pressed by the Huns, crossed the Danube and with the permission of the Roman government settled within the Roman province of Moesia with the obligation of providing military service and obedience, since the Huns were repeatedly attacking the Balkan provinces of the Eastern Roman Empire. The relationship of the Huns with the Western Roman Empire was initially on a different basis. So, Hun hired detachments were some of the army of Rome, especially after 420 AD. The empire used them, in particular, to deal now and then with mutinies on the part of the Franks and Burgundians who settled on the Rhine, as well as the Bacaudae – peasants of north-western Gaul - who tried to secede from Rome. In the late 440s the situation changed. The Huns' ruler Attila (born ca. 395 AD, died. 453 AD) started to interfere in the internal affairs of the Western Roman Empire. Attila ruled from 434 AD till 453 AD.

The greatest territorial expansion and the greatest power of the Hun Empire in the West was when the centre of their activities reached Pannonia under the leadership of Attila. Greek and Latin sources indicate that Attila was of royal lineage, a line which for generations had ruled the Huns [8]. Attila was a great statesman who had done great deeds. He was a wise ruler, a skilled diplomat, and a fair judge. With good reason he should be considered a prominent figure in the first millennium AD.

The Hun land under Attila's control consisted of four areas: the northern border of the kingdom which stretched from the Hun's homeland to the west of Germany. In the south, both Roman Empires (the Eastern Roman and the Western Roman Empire) were paying tribute to Attila. In terms of its territory and influence, Attila's empire covered geographically almost all the four corners of the known world, from east to west and from north to south (ancient Turkic: *tört bulun*, Kazakh "dȳnienin tort buryshy"). The Hun territory ran from east to west - from Altai, Central Asia and the Caucasus to the Danube and the Rhine. The Hun's Union in Central Asia contributed to the later emergence of the Kazakh nation and other Turkic peoples [9].

By accumulating and concentrating power, the Hun ruler organized an invasion of Western Europe, in order to expand the territory of his state. The struggle against the Huns united the Roman Empire and the Visigoths, and other unions of Celtic and Germanic tribes. Old arguments and struggles were forgotten. The united army of Rome, the Visigoth kingdom and other tribal alliances of the West were headed by patrician Flavius Aetius. However, Flavius Aetius was involved in the struggle for power in Rome at this time and was forced to flee to the Huns from whom he received support. He returned in 433 AD to Italy with the Hun army, where he again took top positions in the state and was given command of the armed forces of the Roman Empire.

In April 451 AD in the cities of Gaul - Metz, Tongeren, Speyer, and Reims – were razed to the ground while a strong panic involved Paris too. The inhabitants of ancient Lutetia would have liked to have run. Legend explains the salvation of the city as a result of the extraordinarily brave behaviour of a woman - St. Genevieve (Genevieve) [Heilige Genevieve], who later became known as the patroness of Paris. From "The Life of St. Genevieve" we learn: "At that time the king of the Huns, Attila, began to ravage the province of Gaul. Because Parisians feared his cruelty and anger, they decided to send the women and children and some belongings to a safe place. St. Genevieve then appeared and persuaded the women not to leave the city in which they were born and had grown up, in the hour of danger. Moreover, she said that they had to prepare themselves and their men to defence the city. They should ask God for

help and salvation. The Holy Mother listened and decided to stay in the city and rely on God's mercy. So, the saint persuaded them not to leave Paris and stay, asking God for help, to save them from the imminent danger [10].

However, Attila did not reach Paris. Instead, the Huns rushed to Orleans, and began their assault. It should be noted that it was protected by stone bridges and high defensive towers over the Loire. How was Orleans able to withstand the onslaught of such a formidable enemy? The Roman army and the forces of the Visigoth kingdom arrived in time to lift the siege of Orleans. This, of course, complicated the city's capture. It is possible that Attila, doubting its rapid capture, raised the siege. Perhaps Attila turned to Oracle because Hun soothsayers advised him not to continue the siege. Perhaps, Attila sought a more convenient open space in which to fight... and a decisive place (General) came in the form of a battle at Catalaunia (Latin Campi Catalaunici) in Champagne (France).

In the evaluation of the largest battle, a number of Western history scholars, both modern and contemporary, drew on information from the chroniclers of the early Middle Ages, and used them uncritically. The objective evaluation of historical reality is always difficult. A Belgian historian - Pirenne concluded that Attila, getting through the Rhine in the spring of 451 AD, devastated everything up to the Loire. Aetius stopped him with the help of the Germans near Troyes. The Franks, Burgundians and Visigoths and others were good allies. The military art of the Romans and German bravery decided everything here... Attila's death in 453 AD resulted in the collapse of Hun power, and thereby saved the West“ [6, p. 162].

In assessing the history of the Huns, Western historiographic tradition is largely influenced by Russian and Soviet historiography, including the post-Soviet literature.

The situation in Gaul, in our opinion, can be explained by too many large-scale marches by Attila, and the inability within the vast territory involved, restraining the mass of tribes and entities that were not related socially or ethnically with the Huns, under the unified leadership. Indeed, the Hun forces after “The Battle of the Nations” of 451 AD were by no means exhausted [11]. Evidence of this is the fact that literally the following year, Attila undertook a new advance into the heart of the Roman Empire - Italy.

Immediately after returning from the Gallic march of 451, Attila resumed requirements to the Eastern Roman Empire for the payment of tribute in former scale, as it was earlier in the times of the emperor Theodosius. Otherwise, Attila threatened war. This fact also shows that the strength and fighting ardour of the Huns was far from exhausted. On the contrary, their ruler still fought both Roman Empires at the same time. In the spring of 452 AD, he gathered an efficient army and began to organize a new march, not just anywhere, but to the heart of the Roman Empire – Italy. With regard to this outcome, apparently Byzantine diplomacy played a role, and through complex intrigues managed to send Attila against the West, and thereby averted the impending threat.

In this invasion, the Hun troops seized cities such as Aquileia, Concordia, Altin, Patavy (now Padua), Vitsetiya (now Vicenza), Verona, Brixenn (now Brescia), Bergamo, Milan and Ticinus (now Pavia). Those cities which resisted were ruined; preferred to surrender, before the onslaught of the Huns.

If Attila, standing in front of the walls of Rome, was stopped by the Pope, the same cannot be said of the other characters of the time of Genseric, king of the Vandals. Three years later, in 455 AD, the same Leo I could not hold him. Vandals looted and destroyed, and stripped its population of everything; hence the concept of “vandalism” - the mass destruction of cultural and material values, brutality and senseless cruelty. After 14 days plunder of Rome, Genseric left the city with his troops. There is evidence that the king of the Vandals brought out thousands of prisoners and Roman artisans. As Procopius Caesarea in particular, wrote Genseric “...loading huge amounts of gold on the ships and other royal treasures, sailed to Carthage, taking out of the palace, copper, and everything else. He robbed the temple of Jupiter Capitoline and took half of its roof off. That roof was made of the best copper and covered with a thick layer of gold, representing a majestic and amazing sight. They say one of Genseric’s ships with statues was lost and the vandals, with all the rest, entered safely the harbour of Carthage” [12].

Having returned to Pannonia, the Hun ruler started preparing a new march, but this time against the Eastern Roman Empire. Jordanes wrote, “Attila returned to their encampment, and as if feeling the stand-off and the termination of war to be a burden, sent ambassadors to Marcian, Emperor of the Eastern Empire, stating his intention to rob the province, because he had not been paid tribute as promised by the late Emperor Theodosius ...” (Reversus itaque Attila in sedes suas, et quasi otii penitens graviterque ferens a bello cessare, ad Orientis principem Marcianum legatos dirigit, provinciarum testans vastationem, quod sibi promissum a Theodosio quondam imperatore minime persolveretur ...) [13].

The last few months of the life the King of the Huns was spent preparing a military campaign in the East. But a new war with the Byzantine Empire did not happen. In the spring of 453 AD, the ruler of the Hun Empire, Attila, died.

Thus, we need to examine the events of 451-452 AD. Both European wars involving the Huns provide evidence of the military power of the Hun state. This is shown by the fact that, in 451 AD, the Western Roman Empire united almost the whole of the West against the Huns, but after a few months (less than a year), it could not resist the Hun invasion into the heart of the Empire. And even that the ruler of the great Hun state, to whom both Roman empires were paying tribute, stopped at the walls of the city of Rome, and listened to the requests of an embassy headed by the Pope. What does this say about the wisdom of Attila? ‘..This says a great deal about the wisdom of Attila...’

The Hun invasion in the mid V c. - 451-452 AD - objectively shattered the Western Roman Empire, bringing about its decline. This event happened very soon after, i.e. in 476, when the last Western Roman Emperor, Romulus Augustulus, was deposed by the leader of the German Odoacer mercenaries – the son of Edeco (Edikon) – who held a high position during Attila’s reign.

Attila and his time left an indelible mark in the history of Eurasia, which has been preserved not only in historical works, chronicles and epic creations. Reading and analyzing rare historical data in Latin, early German and Scandinavian languages, we were able to establish that at least 18 and the works of German and Scandinavian heroic epic sagas reflect the great deeds of the Huns and their ruler (in which he called Attila, Etzel, Atzel, Atli) [14].

Conclusion

Here we would like to say something about the period of world history relating to the turn of antiquity into the Middle Ages, which involves the history of Eurasia and Kazakhstan. In Russian and Soviet historiography, 476 AD is generally accepted as the passing from the ancient history era to the beginning of the Middle Ages. This date appeared in Soviet historiography, and remains in the current Russian Federation, and of course, the CIS countries. It is just a conditional date, the year of deposition of the last Western Roman Emperor, rather than the year of a major historical event. The background had been founded a century earlier, with the tumultuous events of the Great Migration in Europe after 375 AD, when the Hun invasion of Europe rocked the entire Eurasian continent, having far-reaching consequences in terms of globality and scale. It contributed to the transition from one era to another, from one civilization to another. This was an epochal event, common to all the countries of Europe and Asia. Therefore, we can date the beginning of medieval history on a global basis for good reason, including, in relation to the history of Kazakhstan, from the second half of the IV century (375 AD) - the turning point of the Great Migration in Eurasia. Such an approach to the question of the end of the history of antiquity and the beginning of medieval history was marked in particular in a number of professor Zhumagulov’s reports published in Kazakhstan and abroad, and is included in the sample programme on the history of the Middle Ages, developed and published by the Department of World History, Historiography and Source Studies of Al-Farabi Kazakh National University for all the humanities specialties of the universities of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

After the death of Attila the Hun, the Empire collapsed in the West during the reign of his sons who succeeded him. Some of the Huns remained north of the Lower Danube. Most of them went to the Greater Black Sea area and further to the east towards the Urals and the Aral Sea, i.e. to the former eastern limits of the huge Hun Empire. The local Huns continued their march against neighbouring countries. So, Huns-Ephtalits, after a successful struggle against the Sassanids at the end of V c. AD, subjugated Gandhara. Their leaders, Toraman and Mihirakula, took over Gupta in India, in the first quarter of VI c. AD.

Over a period of nearly a century in the turbulent era of the Great Migration, the Hun Empire clearly had an impact on the fate of European and Eurasian history in terms of the transition to a new era and the civilization of the Middle Ages.

After the collapse of the Hun Empire numerous tribes that are mentioned in a number of early medieval sources were left to roam in the European steppes. Among these nomadic ethnic groups, the Avars stood out.

Archaeological data confirm the historical continuity of the Avar Khaganate during the VI-VII centuries AD and the Hun Empire, in terms of its multi-tribal development of international relations from the East (the Altai region of Central Asia, Iran) - to the West (the Byzantine Empire, the German union tribal entities and kingdoms) [15].

Subsequently, the mass migration of Slavic tribes, and furthermore, their resettlement in the territories of the Byzantine Empire, was one of the final stages of the Great Migration in Eurasia and Europe.

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