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'LIKE A CERTAIN TORNADO OF PEOPLES': WARFARE OF THE EUROPEAN HUNS IN THE LIGHT OF GRAECO-LATIN LITERARY TRADITION*

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In the early 370s, from behind the Volga river certain nomads, who were named Huns (Hun[n]i and Chuni in Latin, Οὖννοι in Greek)[1] in the Late Classical tradition, had invaded the steppes of the Northern Pontic area. Their invasion delivered a mighty impulse to the great movement of tribes within the western part of Eurasia, which has been called 'The Great Migration Period'. Shortly after, in the first half of the 5th century, the Huns, thanks to their superiority in warfare over local peoples (Sarmato-Alans, Eastern Germans and others), turned into the strongest military and political power in South-Eastern and Central Europe. The Hun domination lasted there until the fall of the empire created by the great king Attila, which occurred under his sons, c. 470 A.D. That, not so long, a space of time (just about one century) had,

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[1] See, e. g. Budanova 2000, 209–210.

nevertheless, a considerable influence upon the world of Late Antiquity. Indeed, Hun hordes led by Attila, who was nicknamed the 'Scourge of God' by his European contemporaries, did threaten more than once the existence itself of the Western civilization.

The present paper deals with all the basic components of martial practices of the European Huns, such as arms and armour, horse equipment, armed forces, strategy and tactics, siegecraft and the structure of military organization. The main data to be analysed are the available written records from surviving Late Roman and Early Byzantine literary sources, among which the most principal ones come from the works of Ammianus Marcellinus, Olympiodorus of Thebes, Zosimus, Sozomenus, Priscus of Panium, Claudian, Merobaudes, Sidonius, and Jordanes. The majority of these authors were contemporaries of the Huns. True, unfortunately, not all of their writings (in particular, those of Olympiodorus and Priscus) have survived as a whole.[2] When necessary, the literary evidence is supplemented with archaeological material to shed more light on the matters in question.

First of all, in order to reveal as better as possible the chief peculiarities of Hun warfare, a reply must be given to an old problem of correlating the eastern Central Asian people called Hsiung-nu, who were from the 2nd century B.C. to the 2nd century A.D. constant and dangerous enemies of Han China, on the one hand, with the European Huns, on the other. This very complicated matter has been discussed very much, but answered differently.[3] However that might be, an analysis of various data, such as written sources, archaeological finds and anthropological observations, enables the present author to share a point of view that the Hun horde intruding in the West must have consisted, at least in a large part, of the descendants of those Hsiung-nu who had departed in the 2nd century A.D. westwards from their homeland in Mongolia after the defeats caused by the Chinese and the Hsien-pi. Ethnic-cultural links between the Hsiung-nu and the European Huns are well confirmed by such categories of Hun material culture as: 1). iron arrowheads having no parallels in armament of the previous, Sarmatian-Alan, culture of the Northern Pontic area, but obviously going back to military antiquities of the first centuries A.D. left by the Hsiung-nu and other steppe peoples of Central Asia; 2). the noted bronze cauldrons that were very characteristic just for the Hsiung-nu culture. Besides, classical descriptions of the Huns' outward appearance give no doubt that these newcomers belonged to the Mongoloid race.[4] Running ahead, it should be

[2] General surveys of the ancient written tradition concerning the European Huns are adduced in Thompson 1948, 4–14; 1999, 6–18; Maenchen-Helfen 1973, 1–17; Nikonorov 2002a, 228–232.

[3] See Sinor 1990, 177–179; 1993, 4–7; Bell-Fialkoff 2000, 215–217; Golden 2002, 108–109, n. 14; de La Vaissière 2005.

[4] See in detail Zasetskaia 1994, 151–155; Zasetskaia, Bokovenko 1994.

stated that one more strong evidence of genetic relationship of the Hsiung-nu with the Huns comes from the sphere of warfare. If one compares martial practices of the former[5] with those of the latter to be brought to light below, one can see many common features in weaponry, tactics, strategy, etc.

It is to be added that the name 'Huns' applied to the entire Hun horde also covered some peoples of the Finno-Ugrian and Middle Asian (Iranian) origins, who were involved in the movement of the departing Hsiung-nu on their long route to Europe.

As it follows from the available source data, the main body of Hun armies consisted of light-armed cavalry. Its troopers were equipped with big (120–150 cm long at average) and powerful, composite, bows ('arcus': Sidon. *Carm*. II, 266; Iord. *Get*. 128; 255; Land. Sag. XII, 187) that were the Hun principal weapon of offence. They had the shape of two arches joined by a straight handle; their wooden stave, as a rule backed with sinew, was necessarily reinforced with bone and horn laths on its ears and handle to make the entire construction more flexible and, therefore, much more long-range. Bows of this type (which is only conditionally called by researchers 'Hun' or 'Qum Darya' or even 'Hun-Parthian') had originated in the eastern part of the Central Asian steppes during the last centuries B.C. and subsequently spread far westwards, including through the instrumentality of the Huns themselves.[6] The appearance of such mighty, bone- and horn-reinforced, bows revolutionized very much ancient mounted warfare.

In all likelihood, each Hun warrior had more than one bow at his disposal. We may suppose this, for instance, being told by the Arabic literary tradition of the 9th century A.D. that an ancient Turk rider, i. e. a warrior originating from the same Central Asian milieu as the Huns, carried with himself two or three bows together with a respective number of strings.[7] The Huns, including their leaders, were particularly noted for their great skill of archery (εὐφυεστάτη τοξεία: Olymp. *fr*. 18 D = *fr*. 19 B; Zosim. IV, 20, 4; Sidon. *Carm*. II, 266–269; Iord. *Get.* 128; Land. Sag. XII, 187). The bow served, too, as a badge of power in the midst of the Huns. This is confirmed by the fact that among their high nobility there were in use models of the arm outfitted with golden end laths, the so-called 'golden bows', playing a very prestigious social role. Such laths have been discovered in Hun princely burials at Jakuszowice in Poland, Pécs-Üszögpuszta and Bátaszék in Hungary.[8]

[5] Khudiakov 1986, 25–52, 243–246; see also Laufer 1914, 223–229.

[6] Werner 1956, 46–50; Rausing 1967, 68–69, 110–111, 115–119, 122–128, 143–144, 150; Khazanov 1971, 30–35; Coulston 1985, 242–243; Khudiakov 1986, 26–30; Bóna 1991, 167–170; Zasetskaia 1994, 35–36; Gorelik 1995, 364–371; Lebedynsky 2001, 176–177.

[7] Harley Walker 1915, 667.

[8] László 1951; Harmatta 1951; Bóna 1991, Abb. 47, 50, 54, 55, Taf. 47, 50, 54, Farbtaf. XVII.

In reports of the Classical writers the arrows figure as well ('missilia tela' = 'spicula': Amm. Marc. XXXI,2, 9; βέλη: Prisc. *fr*. 1b D = 6, 2 B; 'sagittae': Hier. *Ep*. 60, 17; Iord. *Get*. 128; 249; 261; Land. Sag. XII, 187; σαγίτα: Malal. p. 358, 21; 'spicula': Sidon. *Carm.* II, 266; 'iacula': Sidon. *Carm.* VII, 236; 'tela': Merob. *Pan.* II, 80; Iord. *Get.* 206). It is interesting that Ammianus Marcellinus, when speaking of Hun arrows (XXXI, 2, 9), refers solely to those provided with bone heads skilfully attached to shafts and variously produced ('acutis ossibus pro spiculorum acumine arte mira coagmentatis et distinctis'). It does not mean, of course, that these were the only ones applied by the Huns at his time. He rather simply paid attention to this, very exotic, kind of arrowheads. For sure, Huns made use of metal (iron) arrowheads too, especially as solely they have come from graves of the Hun epoch in South-Eastern Europe, whereas ones of bone have not been found yet.[9] This fact, by the way, cannot be employed to call Ammianus' information in question as this is sometimes done,[10] because it is well known, in particular, that bone arrowheads were widespread among the Hsiung-nu of Central Asia, i. e. the European Huns' forebears.[11] True, arrowheads made from bone, the manufacture of which did not require any complicated technology, were suitable only to hit the enemies bearing no armour. And so, when the Huns came in Europe into collision with safely protected foes, such as the Romans, they were forced to limit the use of bone arrowheads and give preference to iron ones. As it has been said above, the Huns even brought with themselves new types of the latter. There is an opinion that arrows shot from Hun bows could pierce through armour at a distance of 100 m.[12]

Of other articles of Hun archery equipment there is a mention of guilt quivers ('auratae pharetrae') in Latin literary tradition (Merob. *Pan*. II, 80).

For close fighting the Huns used the sword ('ferrum': Amm. Marc. XXXI, 2, 9; cf. Sidon. *Carm*. II, 298; VII, 249; ξίφος: Prisc. *fr*. 8 D = 13, 1; 15, 1 B; cf. Ibid. *fr* 8 D = 12, 1 B; 'ensis': Merob. *Pan.* II, 83; see also Iord. *Get*. 183 and Greg. Tur. *HF* II, 6: 'gladius'; Malal. p. 359, 5: σπαθάριος, i. e. 'a σπάθη-bearer'). According to archaeological data, Huns employed two kinds of swords: one with a long (until 90 cm) double-edged blade and the other with a shorter (50–60 cm) single-edged blade. The latters discovered in a less number are thought to have appeared in South-Eastern Europe just with the Huns.[13] It cannot be ruled out that Hun riders did have such a sword set. In this connection deserving attention is the fact of the combined being of a long double-edged

[9] Zasetskaia 1994, 36–39, 208–209.
[10] King 1987 [1995], 81–82, 89.
[11] Khudiakov 1986, 34–37, 39–42, 214–216.
[12] Laing 2000, 130.
[13] Werner 1956, 38–46; Zasetskaia 1994, 23–34; Bóna 1991, 175–176.

sword and a shorter single-edged broadsword in some burials of the Germanic nobles in Western Europe.[14] Another interesting evidence comes from the 'Waltharius' – a Latin heroic poem of the 9th century A.D. which is based on a lost, much elder, Germanic legend related to the famous Nibelungen epic dealing, in turn, with the destruction of the Burgundian realm by the Huns in 437. There is a reference to 'the custom of the Panonians' (these were, according to a historical context of the narrative, rather Huns) to belt oneself with a double set of bladed arms – a long two-edged sword ('ensis') on the left side and a short one-edged broadsword ('semispata') on the right.[15] Is it an echoe of the Huns' martial habit to carry both such weapons?

Besides, we are spoken by one of our informants (Merob. *Pan*. II, 79–80) of a Hun heavy, adorned with gold, belt ('gravis… auro balteus'), to which a sword with no less rich ornamentation seems to have been suspended.

Like the bow, the sword was esteemed by the Huns as a sacral object personifying a god of war (Prisc. *fr*. 8 D = 12, 1 B; Iord. *Get*. 183; see also Maenchen-Helfen 1973: 278–280).

It is important to notice that none of the written sources lists javelins or other kinds of spear in the composition of Hun armament. This fact finds support in archaeological materials: so, only one spearhead has been uncovered at Hun-epoch sites of the Northern Pontic area by now. These circumstances allow to agree with a conclusion that 'this type of weaponry did not spread in the Hun host'.[16] On the other hand, one should reject a point of view that the Huns had even lances.[17] By the way, this ill-grounded opinion has been, unfortunately, reflected in modern reconstructions of the Hun warrior's aspect.[18]

One more important offensive arm, very typical for nomadic peoples of Eurasia at all, was the lasso,[19] which the Huns threw on their opponents at a middle range (Amm. Marc. XXXI, 2, 9: 'lacinia'; Sozom. VII, 26, 8: βρόχος = σχοινίον).[20]

Heavy armour did not spread to any considerable degree in the bulk of Hun troops because of their tactics consisting in both heightened mobility and preference to fight from a distance, not in hand-to-hand combat (see below). As body

[14] Kazanski 1991, 132–133.

[15] Nickel 1973.

[16] Zasetskaia 1994, 35.

[17] Bruhn Hoffmeyer 1966, 116–117, 120; Hildinger 1997, 64.

[18] See, e. g. Ferrill 1991, 143.

[19] Khazanov 1971, 50–51; Maenchen-Helfen 1973, 239–240; Sinor 1981, 141–142; Golden 2002, 151.

[20] Cf. Olymp. *fr*. 17 D = 18 B, where this device under the term σόκκος figures as used by rather Hun mercenaries of the Gothic chief Athaulf than by his own soldiers (see Baldwin 1980, 226).

protector Hun rank-and-file men bore the shield (ἀσπίς) referred to by the church historian Sozomen who tells, in particular, how one of Huns raiding the Roman province of Moesia made use of his lasso with the object of capturing Theotimus, bishop of Tomis. In order to cast it he 'leaned upon the shield, like he did so usually, when dealing with the adversaries' (ἀσπίδι ἐπειρειδόμενος, ὥσπερ εἰώθει τοῖς πολεμίοις διαλεγόμενος: Sozom. VII, 26, 8). Since our author speaks nothing of whether the Hun was mounted or dismounted, some scholars have believed him to have been on foot at the moment of casting, and so his schield was too large to be used on horseback.[21] However, this conclusion is rather incorrect. The fact is that the lasso, above all, was an arm just of horsemen, as the technique of mastering it includes the use of horse traction to draw the caught victim away. On the other hand, it is difficult to imagine that the Huns were raiding – and the cited passage of Sozomen should be considered solely in such a context – as pedestrians: really, it would be a nonsense! Taking into account these considerations, one may conclude that the protective arm in question must have been a comparatively small and light shield manufactured from wood and covered with leather or skin, and so quite suitable to be employed in cavalry.

In addition, Hun ordinary soldiers had curved fur-caps ('galeri incurvi': Amm. Marc. XXXI, 2, 6) that served as protectors to their heads. The same caps seem to be meant under the word 'tiarae' by St Jerome (Hier. *Ep*. 60, 17) who contrasts them with the Roman helmets called by him 'galeae'.

Warriors from the Hun aristocratic milieu could wear costly metal armour, doing so rather under Roman inspiration. So, we are told twice about Hun metal helmets. In one case they figure as being guilt, under the term 'cassis' (Merob. *Pan*. II, 83), in the other they are named 'galea' (Sidon. *Carm*. II, 255). A context of the second report, concerning the Hun practice of intentional disfiguration of men's faces with the object of fitting them to needs of war, as if allows to come to a conclusion that such helmets were provided with nose-pieces. If so, they may have rather belonged to the well known Late Roman 'ridge helmet' type,[22] especially as a similar headpiece made from iron and covered with sheet silver was discovered in 1812 in a grave of a 'Hun prince' at Conçesti in Moldavia.[23]

There are several references to corselets of the Huns. Some body armour was worn by a certain ruler, probably a Hun by birth, who, c. 400 A.D., had been controlling a region within the Northern Pontic area.[24] Our source, the bishop Asterius, points out that it was 'a martial corselet (θώραξ πολεμικός) strewn with treasures (so long as the barbarian weaponry is boastful and pretentious)' (Aster.

[21] Maenchen-Helfen 1973, 254; Lindner 1981, 8.

[22] See on it James 1986; Bishop, Coulston 1993, 167, 169–172; Southern, Dixon 1996, 92–95.

[23] Matzulewitsch 1929, 125–126, Taf. 49; Zasetskaia 1994, 175, pl. 20/4.

[24] See Maenchen-Helfen 1973, 249–250.

Hom. 9). One of the preserved fragments from Priscus' historical work informs us about Zercon, a Moorish jester, who accompanied everywhere in campaigns his lord, the Hun king Bleda, being encased in a full armour set (πανοπλία) specially manufactured for him in order to amuse more the people around (Prisc. *fr.* 11 D = 13, 2 B [= Suid. s. v. Ζέρκων]).

The last reliable evidence concerning Hun corselets[25] is present at Sidonius' description of an equestrian single combat between Avitus, the future Western Roman emperor, and a Hun from the army of the Roman general Litorius in the course of the campaign of 436 in Gaul. In the final of this duel, in his third charge the Roman transfixed the foe so that the latter's corselet ('thorax') proved to be pierced through from the front and back (Sidon. *Carm.* VII, 289–294). This body armour, covering both the chest and back, might have been a corselet of the chain-mail type ('lorica hamata'), especially as two finds of such armour – by the way, the only actual testimonies of the Huns' application of corselets at all – have come from burials of the Hun epoch in the south of Russia.[26] Nevertheless, it equally might have been of other constructions also spread in Europe in Later Roman times, viz. scale-armour ('lorica squamata') or (what is less probable) even muscle-cuirass ('thorax').[27]

Proceeding from the scarce literary evidence of Hun armour and from the fact that articles of defensive armament are very rare finds in Hun-period sites, one cannot be in agreement with a point of view[28] assuming the presence in the European Huns' troops of heavy-armed cavalry units.

It should be necessarily taken into consideration that the Huns, like the Alans and the Goths, after having defeated the Romans collected and then used their arms (Oros. VII, 34, 5; Paul. Diac. *HR* XI, 15; Land. Sag. XII, 188).

Some words should be spoken of Hun horses. Indeed, they played a considerable role in everyday life of this nation, not only in warfare but also as a draught force and in religious beliefs as well, etc. Our literary sources assert that the Huns did everything being on horseback: fought, contracted, took counsel with each other, ate and drank, and even slept (Amm. Marc. XXXI, 2, 6–7; Zosim. IV, 20, 4; cf. Prisc. *fr.* 1; 8 D = 2; 11, 2 B; Iord. *Get.* 128; Mauric. XI, 2, 19 M = XI, 2, 68 D). The Latin writers, contemporaries of the Huns' invasions, compared them with the centaurs (Claud. III, 329–330;[29] Sidon. *Carm.* II, 262–266; cf. Amm. Marc.

[25] True, O. Maenchen-Helfen adduces three passages more – those of Pacatus, Merobaudes and Procopius of Caesarea – referring, in his opinion, to Hun corselets (1973, 248–251). However, perhaps with the exception of the second one (Merob. *Pan.* II,82: 'incendant gemmae chalybem'), they have to do nothing with Hun armour proper.

[26] Zasetskaia 1994, 39.

[27] See on all the types in question Robinson 1975, 147–173.

[28] Khazanov 1971, 90; Zasetskaia 1994, 39.

[29] See Levy 1971, 97.

XXXI, 2, 6). There was so widespread an opinion that the Huns hardly went on foot at all (Amm. Marc. XXXI, 2, 6; Zosim. IV, 20, 4; Hier. *Ep*. 60, 17; Suid. s. v. ᾽Ακροσφαλεῖς; cf. Mauric. XI, 2, 19 M = XI, 2, 68–70 D). However, this notion was exceptionally grounded on some awkwardness of their step, quite peculiar to all the other nomadic peoples, for whom the horse was the main means of conveyance (Maenchen-Helfen 1973, 207).

Ammianus Marcellinus names Hun horses outwardly deformed, but of great endurance (Amm. Marc. XXXI, 2, 6). St Jerome (Hier. *Ep*. 60, 17) opposes Hun jades ('caballi') to Roman horses ('equi'), although he notes, nevertheless, swiftness of the former (Ibid. 77, 8). But the fullest information concerning them is given by the Roman military theorist Vegetius (late 4th – former half of the 5th century) in his treatise on veterinary science. In particular, he points out that the horses of the Huns are more suitable for war than others because of their high endurance, efficiency and staunchness to cold and hunger (Veget. *DAM* III, 6, 2). Also, especially mentioned is their exceptional suitability to winter pastures, brought up from the infancy, and stableness to frost and snow (Ibid. II pr. 1–2). In another place of his work Vegetius describes in detail the Hun horses' outward appearance: they have 'the big and hook-like head; prominent eyes; narrow nostrils; broad jaws; mighty and hard neck; manes hanging down below the knees; large ribs; curved spinal column; thick tail; very firm tibial bones; short legs; dense and broad hooves; hollow abdominal cavity and the entirely bony body; no any fat in their buttocks; no any prominences in their muscles; stature more inclined to length than to height; scraggy belly; solid bones. Their thinness is attractive, and in their deformity itself their beauty comes to light. They have the reasonable and wound-patient nature' (Ibid. III, 6, 5). Our sources underline the Hun horses' longevity to have exceeded 50 years (Veget. *DAM* III, 7, 1; Isid. *Etym*. XII, 1, 44).

It is to be thought that the mounts of the European Huns were not so small as their relatives of the Mongolian stock, whose withers height does not exceed, as a rule, 127 cm.[30] The former seriously underwent a modification in the course of the long Hun migration from the eastern part of Central Asia towards Europe. As a result of 'infusions of new blood' from different breeds, horses of the Huns had to increase their size.[31] Their distinctive features, like those of other horse breeds of the Central Asian steppe origin, which were born and brought up in the very severe climatic conditions on the basis of pasturable herd keeping, always were exceptional endurance, unpretentiousness and sufficiently high speed. All this made them a formidable factor of the military mighty of ancient and medieval nomads, whose hordes periodically and all-overwhelmingly fell upon Europe.[32]

[30] Nesterov 1990, 15, 36.
[31] Hyland 1996, 3.
[32] Sinor 1972; 1981, 137.

Among Hun horse-harness our sources refer to breast phalerae adorned with precious stones ('falerae vario gemmarum fulgore praetiosae': Iord. *Get*. 258), a bridle (τοῦ ἵππου ὁ χαλινός: Prisc. *fr*. 8 D = 13, 1 B) and a hook-like bit ('crispata lupata') covered with sheet gold ('aurea lamna': Merob. *Pan*. II, 81). Under the last article it appears to have been meant the curb, cheek-pieces of which did have the shape of curved bars. It was intended for taking, in comparison with the simple two-part bit, the more severe control of a horse. Such a complex bridle, normally consisting of two parts – a cheeked bit and a drop noseband/muzzle, was in use in Iran and Roman Europe as far back as the first centuries A.D.[33]. True, all of those bits that have been uncovered in burials of the European Hun culture belong to the simpler type, made up of two straight pivots, to the ends of which ring- or pivot-like psalia were attached.[34]

Of riding equipment of the Huns we hear of whips (φραγέλλια: Callin. *VH* VI, 2), pieces of which have been discovered in funeral complexes of the epoch under review.[35] It is important to note that this obligatory article of every nomadic warrior's accoutrement, being trimmed frequently with metal details, could be employed not only as means of controlling the horse, but also as a weapon of close combat.[36] One more function of whips was to give the prearranged tactical signals (Callin. *VH* VI, 2; Veget. *ERM* III, 5). Besides, according to P. O. Harper's convincing conclusion grounded on analyzing appropriate pictorial and actual data, in the midst of the horse-riding and horse-breeding nations the whip was also esteemed as a symbol of high social status and power.[37]

Some authors mention Hun saddles (Iord. *Get*. 213: 'equinae sellae'; Paul. Diac. *HR* XIV, 7: 'equitatoriae sellae'). Thanks to archaeological data, it is well known that such saddles certainly were of rigid, wooden, construction provided with the high front and rear arches.[38] It is particularly important to emphasize that regardless of the assertions in modern scholarship that the Huns were acquainted with the stirrups[39] they did not have them for sure. The fact is that this important cavalry device was invented in the Far East no earlier than in the end of the former half of the 1st millennium A.D., i. e. already long after the Huns had moved west-

[33] See Herrmann 1989, 758–763.

[34] Zasetskaia 1994, 40–42; Kazanski 1991, 137–139.

[35] Werner 1956, 54; Lebedynsky 2001, 200–201. But cf. Harper 1982, 186, n. 21, where some doubts are expressed concerning the correctness of J. Werner's interpretation of fragments of the gold cylinders from Hun-epoch burials as just whip details.

[36] See Borodovskiĭ 1987; 1993.

[37] Harper 1982.

[38] Werner 1956, 50–53; Zasetskaia 1994, 45–50; Kazanski 1991, 137; Kazanski et al. 1990, 53, 57–62; Bóna 1991, 68, 177, 179.

[39] See Clark 1941, 53; Howarth 1994, 20; Bruhn Hoffmeyer 1966, 115; cf. Werner 1956, 53; Littauer 1981, 104.

wards from their homeland. In return, the aforementioned arched saddles allowed the Hun riders to have a firm seat on horseback when riding at full speed and shooting arrows both forward and backwards without any problem.[40]

Written records testify to the use by the Huns of gold and precious stones to beautify their weapons and horse-harness (Prisc. *fr*. 8 D = 13, 1 B; Aster. *Hom.* 9; Merob. *Pan*. II, 79–83; Iord. *Get*. 258). This is confirmed as well by numerous finds of articles of everyday consumption, including arms and horse-harness, adorned with gold and silver and ornamented in the so-called 'polychromy' style, which have come to light from sites of the Hun epoch in South-Eastern Europe.[41]

Of special importance in the Hun strategy there was the factor of surprise attacks. Huns led a charge against the enemies 'like a certain tornado of peoples' (Iord. *Get*. 126: [Hunni] quasi quaedam turbo gentium). Owing to the high speed of their horses they made robbery raids so impetuously that even left behind any rumour of their approaching.[42] As a rule, their raids were well planned with the obligatory employment of intelligence information (Amm. Marc. XXXI, 3, 6).[43] In the course of their invasions the Huns aimed at penetrating into the hostile territory as deep as possible. Huns did not shun treachery as well, by attacking, for instance, the nothing suspecting Romans during a fair which took place somewhere within the Danube valley in the reign of Attila (Prisc. *fr*. 2 D = 6, 1 B).

In their tactics the Huns gave preference to fighting at a long distance with keeping permanent high mobility and manoeuvrability. The Hun cavalry always charged first and did that with swift movement, being about to decide the outcome of the battle as soon as possible (cf. Iord. *Get*. 204–205). However, they did not go ahead at breakneck speed: their generals prepared military operations with great care, even thinking out the hour when to start the concrete action so that to have a possibility of saving in case of a failure (Ibid. 196).

The Huns attacked in loose formation, literally 'by wedge' ('cuneatim': Amm. Marc. XXXI, 2, 8), which seems to have had nothing with the real wedge-shaped order.[44] To all appearances, this term conforms to an expression ταῖς κατὰ κούνας τάξεσι τουτέστι ταῖς διεσπαρμέναις ('[to charge] by wedges, i. e. by dispersed detachments') from Maurice's 'Strategicon' as a designation of battle formations which were drawn up by the 'Hun' (in the very broad sense of this

[40] See Nikonorov 2002b.

[41] Zasetskaia 1975; 1994, 50–97; see also Lebedynsky 2001, 81–84.

[42] Amm. Marc. XXXI, 2, 12; Ps.-Aur. Vict. XLVII, 3: omni pernicie atrociores [sc. Huni et Alani]; Auson. XXVI, 26, 8: Chunique truces; Claud. XXI, 110: vaga Chunorum feritas; Hier. *Adv. Jovin*. II, 7: et Hunnorum nova feritas; cf. Sidon. *Carm*. VII, 248-250: qui proxima quaeque discursu, flammis, ferro, feritate, rapinis delebant (here Sidonius speaks of the Hun horsemen in the army of Litorius).

[43] Bachrach 1992, 210.

[44] Ferrill 1991, 30.

ethnic name) peoples (Mauric. XI, 2, 15 M = XI, 2, 54 D). The word κοῦνα in it (= 'cuneus' in Latin) must be understood as a detached unit composed on the basis of tribal or clan consanguinity of its members, like the detachments-cunei of the ancient Germans.[45]

From the report of Ammianus Marcellinus (XXXI, 2, 8–9) one can mark out the two main phases of the Huns' tactics that were characteristic of them, at least, for the early stage of their conquests:

1. initial charge by the deep loose formation under the accompaniment of a terrible war cry and with intensive shooting bows at the enemies from a distance;

2. middle-range and hand-to-hand combat, when the Huns, moving fast throughout the battle field, threw the lassoes on their foes and, approaching them face to face, fought with the swords.

Very usual for the European Huns was the employment of various stratagems. The most important of these was a feigned retreat intended to deceive and fatigue their foes, which was then followed by a sudden counterattack (Claud. III, 331; Zosim. IV, 20, 4; cf. Hier. *Ep*. 77, 8; Agath. I, 22, 1). While retreating, they shot the bows backwards with so high accuracy (the so-called 'Parthian shot') that their persecutors, not expecting that, had serious losses in killed and wounded. Two other favourite stratagems of the Huns were surrounding the enemy order (Zosim. IV, 20, 4; Chron. Gall. p. 652, 52; cf. Agath. V, 19, 8) and laying ambushes (Iord. *Get*. 188; Prisc. *fr*. 2 D = 6, 1 B; cf. Claud. V, 270; Agath. III, 18, 4–9; V, 18, 10). All these tactical tricks were very typical for the Eurasian nomadic military.[46]

It is to be underlined once again that the Huns preferred to fight from a distance, not in close combat. Beyond any doubt, their strategy and tactics went back again to military practices of the Hsiung-nu.[47] Although many Oriental peoples had been fighting since olden times with the bow on horseback, it was the Hsiung-nu and the Huns following them who developed horse-archery into the best form, viz. fighting mainly at a long distance, when the outcome of battle was decided not in hand-to-hand-combat, but in methodical and very efficient shooting at the enemy from afar, i. e. with the least losses for themselves.

However, it should be noted that Hun tactical methods had become quite different under Attila, as one can see this in case of the famous battle on the Catalaunian Fields in 451. It was caused by those changes which occurred by that time in the army of the Huns themselves. Even earlier already (in 370s – 380s), their rulers began to rely, although on a very small scale, upon infantry that was

[45] Todd 1988, 106.

[46] Golden 2002, 135–136.

[47] See Khudiakov 1986, 50–52.

very needful, especially for siege operations and fighting in forests and mountains, etc. It was then that some Goths, Scyri and Carpo-Dacians are mentioned to have supported, as soldiers on foot for sure, Hun raids into the Lower Danubian valley (Amm. Marc. XXXI, 8, 4;16, 3; Ps.-Aur. Vict. XLVII, 3; XLVIII, 5; Zosim. IV, 34, 6). Since the early 5th century, having firmly established themselves on the banks of the Middle and Lower Danube, the Huns passed on to a practice of the more active recruitment of infantry forces from the midst of subdued Eastern Germanic tribes. As such the sources refer to the Scyri (Sozom. IX, 5, 5; CTh V, 6, 3), as well as to the Ostrogoths and the Gepids, the last two having formed the flower of the national host allied to Attila (Iord. *Get*. 199; 200; 209; 217). It seems undoubted that their bulk fought dismounted. However, this transition to the wide employment of warriors on foot marked a decline of the Hun military might initially rested on cavalry warfare. In an open battle like that on the Catalaunian Fields, when large masses of infantry played a significant role and, on the other hand, cavalry was hardly able to make the whole volume of their favourite stratagems (ambushes, simulated retreats, etc.), the Huns lost their advantage before the foes, unlike what had taken place in previous times.

Owing to Jordanes' description (Iord. *Get*. 198), we are aware of the battle order of the Hun army ('Hunnorum acies'), viz. the one taking place on the Catalaunian Fields (451): the supreme ruler 'together with the bravest' (i. e. picked) warriors (undoubtedly, Huns by birth) stood in its centre ('in medio Attila cum suis fortissimis locaretur'), whereas levies recruited from the midst of many peoples subject to him were placed on the flanks ('cornua vero eius multiplices populi et diversae nationes, quos dicioni suae subdiderat, ambiebant'). Evidently, such had to be the optimal battle order composed of ethnically very different contingents.[48]

Almost thirty years ago R. P. Lindner suggested an original theory about the cardinal transformation of the Hun army. In his opinion, the majority of the Huns who came to Europe in the latter half of the 4th century could, indeed, be mounted warriors. Nevertheless, some time after, as a result of the Huns' occupation of the Great Hungarian Plain (Alföld), they had to fail there in getting a necessary amount of horses for war, because the plain is not so large enough, compared to the vast steppe spaces of Central Asia, that to graze very numerous herds of horses. And so, as a matter of fact, by the mid-fifth century the Hun mounted troops had to turn into those on foot similar to the Roman armies of that time. To support his theory R. P. Lindner adduced literary and archaeological data and as well mathematical calculations on the pasturable resources of the Alföld.[49] Many scholars have agreed with his conclusions.

[48] Golden 2002, 133–134.
[49] Lindner 1981; 1982, 701–706.

Nevertheless, in spite of its outer logicality and attraction, it seems difficult to accept R. P. Lindner's opinion entirely and unconditionally. Firstly, his analysis of the available written evidence concerning the Huns acting in a military context looks very straightforward. Since there the Huns in many cases are not mentioned as warriors on horseback, Lindner concludes that they fought on foot. However, from a methodological point of view it is hardly correct to ground the transformation of the Hun mounted troops into dismounted on the basis of the absence in sources of any direct references to their horses. To say nothing of what any argument 'ex silentio' is more than doubtful, one should note that these sources do not state at all that the Huns were exactly pedestrians! For instance, one should bear in mind the information that having failed at the battle on the Catalaunian Fields, Attila blocked up himself in his camp and ordered a fire of saddles (!) to be built inside so that to fall into it if he sees a real danger to be captured by the enemy (Iord. *Get*. 213; Paul. Diac. *HR* XIV, 7). It is to be supposed that such a fire, which would have been monumental in accordance with the highest rank of the Hun king, required a lot of saddles and, therefore, a big number of riders had to part with them. Let us speak as well of 'the picked cavalrymen from the entire Hun people' who partook in the funeral ceremony of Attila (Iord. *Get*. 256) and seem to have been the best against a background of other, for sure very numerous, Hun horsemen.

Most likely, the mounted nature of Hun warfare was so evident to our authors that they even decided not to lay emphasis on this circumstance once more. Take notice as well of the fact that Lindner considers, in particular, the aforecited episode from Sozomen's story of the Hun trying to lasso the bishop Theotimus (Sozom. VII, 26, 8) as an additional argument in favour of his theory.[50] But, as we have seen, such an interpretation of this passage is in fact defenceless and so cannot be accepted.

Secondly, as regards the claimed impossibility to keep a sufficient number of horses for the numerous Hun cavalry in the conditions of the Great Hungarian Plain. Here it is obligatory to bear in mind the fact that the lands between the Danube and the Tisza rivers, where Attila's headquarters were plausibly situated, were not the only ones of his domains. The realm of Attila did embrace regions to the east of the Carpathian mountains, including at least Scythia near the Pontus (= the Black Sea), i. e. the Northern Pontic area, where the elder son of Attila ruled (Prisc. *fr*. 8 D = 11, 2 B).[51] And in this case the pasturable resources in the east of the Hun empire were quite sufficient to graze a very big number of war horses. Therefore, Attila when intending to undertake a serious campaign was

[50] Lindner 1981, 8.

[51] See also an opinion that the bulk of Huns even in the age of Attila dwelt to the east of the Hungarian plain (Sinor 1990, 203).

able to recruit in his eastern possessions a quite considerable reinforcement for his cavalry.[52] This is another matter that, as D. Sinor has rightly pointed out, the invasions of Gaul and Italy by the army of Attila in 451 and 452 respectively could not be successful because their territories lacked sufficient natural resources to maintain for a long time huge hordes of the Hun riders and their horses.[53] Perhaps, these campaigns were lasting much longer than Attila planned himself, and there was the problem of supplying his army strongly aggravated with the military failures (as it did occur in Gaul) that forced him to go back where he came from.

Thirdly, some doubts are as concerning the correctness of R. P. Lindner's appraisal of the pasturable resources of the Hungarian plain. In his opinion, there simultaneously 150,000 horses could graze and at a rate of 10 mounts per one rider at average the Hun troops numbered only 15,000 men. For comparison this scholar adduced the pasturable means of Mongolia, where in the Middle Ages a nomadic warrior had until 18 horses at his disposal.[54] However, as J. Keegan has written on this occasion,[55] it is needful to take into consideration the fact that the climate and natural conditions of the Great Hungarian Plain are much more mild and favourable for pasturable horse-breeding than those of the steppes. Thanks to that the Alföld Huns were able to breed a considerable quantity of horses and, therefore, provide a large mounted force.[56] The figure of 10 horses per one Hun cavalryman, calculated by R. P. Lindner at will as understated, is possibly even overstated. So, for instance, it is well known that in 1914 in Hungary a cavalry force was recruited that numbered 29,000 men at a rate of one horse per rider and, 'though the horses would have been larger than Attila's and partly grain-fed, such differences are not sufficient to explain a tenfold diminution of requirements. Hun horses must have thrived in the seventy years they were there and it is most unlikely that Attila was short of them when he set out

[52] See also Lebedynsky 2001, 72–73.

[53] Sinor 1993, 10–11.

[54] Lindner 1981, 14–15.

[55] Keegan 1993, 187.

[56] On the other hand, J. Keegan thinks that a considerable portion of the horses in Attila's army 'were ridden to death and that they could not be replaced down his line of communications. Cavalry campaigns kill horses in huge numbers if they cannot be regularly rested and grazed. During the Boer War of 1899–1902, for example, the British army lost 347,000 out of the 518,000 that took part, though the country abounded in good grazing and has a benign climate. Only a tiny fraction, no more than two per cent, were lost in battle. The rest died of overwork, disease or malnutrition, at a rate of 336 for each day of the campaign. Attila, moreover, had no means of moving his horses by waggon or ship, as the British transported theirs to and within South Africa. The likelihood is, therefore, that any remounts he received along the overland route from Hungary arrived in little better shape than those his men were already riding, and that the retreat to the grasslands finished off many of the survivors' (Keegan 1993, 187–188).

for the west in 450'.[57] Of course, it remains only to guess what was such a ratio in reality at the days of Attila, but with all differences in horse-breeding practices of both the epochs it does not seem so evident that in the mid-fifth century a Hun warrior from the Great Hungarian Plain needed the amount of horses which was in 10 times more than that required by a Hungarian cavalryman in the early 20th century.[58]

It is needful as well to take into account such plausibility that under the Romans' influence those Huns who took up their residence on the Alföld could transfer at least some portion of their herds to the indoor maintenance with an additional fodder in winter. In turn, this had to be favourable to a state of their horse resources. At last, not the least of the factors is that the Huns, in addition to breeding their own horse population, made also use of the horses captured as booty from the Romans (Oros. VII, 34, 5; Paul. Diac. *HR* XI, 15; Land. Sag. XII, 188).

To sum up this discussion,[59] it should be said that the army of Attila did differ in its organizational structure from the Huns' one-and-all mounted troops of a period of their earlier conquests in Europe. It is possible even to speak of a certain degradation of the European Hun warfare as a whole, caused by the inclusion of large numbers of the Germanic warriors into Attila's host. However, it was an objective corollary of the completion under him of the transformation of the Hun tribal confederation into a barbarian despotic state of imperial type. It was then that the primary mono-ethnicity of armed forces as the most important principle of preserving traditions in the sphere of art of war could not be already intact. Besides that, the Huns could have had serious problems when keeping a horse population in the west of their domains, as well as when supplying their cavalry with forage in the course of military operations within the hostile territory. All these factors had to exert negative influence upon the efficiency of the Hun war machine. At the same time, it seems that there are no sufficient proofs, contrary to the widely accepted theory of R. P. Lindner, to assert that Attila's properly Hun soldiers were transformed in a considerable degree from cavalrymen into combatants on foot:

[57] Keegan 1993, 187.

[58] By the way, through looking, for instance, at what is told in literary sources of another equestrian people inhabiting the Northern Pontic steppes in Antiquity – the Sarmatians – we get to know that each of them while undertaking military campaigns and raids had only two (or even one) reserve horses at his disposal (Polyaen. VIII, 56; Amm. Marc. XVII, 12, 3; cf. references to the Alans and the Moesians – see Ambros. *De excid. urb. Hieros*. V, 50 and Val. Flacc. VI, 161–162 respectively).

[59] Additional criticism of Lindner's theory, which is some later than my own thoughts on this point originally expressed in 2002 (Nikonorov 2002a, 267–270) may be found in Sidebottom 2004, 79–81.

quite apart from other considerations, so entire a transformation would obviously have contradicted the Huns' martial mentality.

The Hun horde of mounted archers, which would seem to have been invincible, had, however, its weakness. Above all, they experienced much difficulty to fight enemies who were, like the Huns themselves, mobile and well-trained in shooting from afar. Such were, in particular, the Persians who had proved to be able in the late 4th century to overwhelm invading Hun troops by firing a huge number of arrows (Prisc. *fr*. 8 D = 11, 2 B). Of no small importance was the fact that the Huns were then heavily burdened with the captured booty. The same case always limited to their mobility (Max. Tur. *Hom*. 94),[60] sometimes forcing them to stop even successfully advancing offensives (Amm. Marc. XXXI, 3, 8). And what is more, while coming back from a campaign the Huns could lose vigilance to such a degree that their not so numerous adversaries in the course of a surprise attack not only inflicted heavy losses on them, but also deprived them of the loot. It was such an event that occurred in the early 440s, when after an unfortunate siege by the Huns of Asemus, a strong Roman fortress on the Danube frontier, its defenders brought themselves to pursue the retreating foes who were both burdened with the booty and absolutely careless (Prisc. *fr*. 5 D = 9, 3 B).[61]

By the way, the Huns' insufficient watchfulness adversely affected as well their organization of sentry service. So, it is known that the Hun soldiers, who were serving in the guards of the Western Roman General-in-Chief Stilicho, were treacherously annihilated in their sleep by Sarus the Goth, one of the same Stilicho's military leaders (Zosim. V, 34, 1). Another instance is the defeat of the Huns by a host of the Burgundians c. 430, when the latter, only 3,000 in number, in consequence of a surprise attack won a victory over 10,000–man Hun troops (Socr. Schol. VII, 30, 6; Cassiod. *Hist*. XII, 4).

The Huns made active use of psychological warfare. Among its means a particular place was occupied by their loathsome outward appearance which terrified very much their Roman and other opponents. Ancient authors paid considerable attention to the fact that the Huns had a custom of scratching all over the faces of new-born male children, although, in their opinion, these aliens were ugly even without this brutal operation (Amm. Marc. XXXI, 2, 2–3; Claud. III, 325–327;[62] V, 270; Hier. *Comm. in Is*. III, 7;[63] Sidon. *Carm*. II, 245–257; Hier. *Ep*. 60, 17; Iord. *Get.* 127–128; 206; Land. Sag. XII, 187; cf. Synes. *DR* 15).

Besides, the Huns strove for impressing the foes on battle-field by blowing the trumpets ('tubae': Iord. *Get*. 212; Paul. Diac. *HR* XIV, 7) and, at the same

[60] See Maenchen-Helfen 1973, 138–139.
[61] See also Thompson 1948, 85; 1999, 93.
[62] See Levy 1971, 96.
[63] See Syme 1968, 17.

time, by uttering the terrible war-cry ('variae voces sonantes torvum': Amm. Marc. XXXI, 2, 8).[64]

A distinguishing feature of Hun psychological preparations for military actions were consultations with soothsayers on the outcome of the forthcoming battle and the performance of pagan rites before fighting (Prosp. *Chron*. 1335; Isid. *HG* 24; Paul. Diac. *HR* XIII, 13; Iord. *Get*. 195–196; 209).[65] There is evidence that the Huns sacrificed their captives to the victory ('litavere victoriae': Iord. *Get*. 125); however, this bloody custom perhaps took place only at the initial stage of their conquests in Europe. It is to be supposed that the shamans-soothsayers ('haruspices': Prosp. *Chron*. 1335; Isid. *HG* 24; 'aruspices': Iord. *Get*. 195; 209; Paul. Diac. *HR* XIII, 13; cf. μάντεις: Prisc. *fr*. 8 D = 13, 3 B) were always attached to the Hun army, and their duties included as well a witchcraft with the object of directing damage at the enemies.

Beyond any doubt, the European Huns had the code of military valour and honour, which they were ready to follow in fighting at the price of their own lives. This is directly pointed out by Jordanes in his story about the heroic death of Ellac, the son of Attila, at the battle of Nedao (Iord. *Get*. 262): 'he is known to have perished with such fortitude, having killed a multitude of the enemies, that [his] father, if he would have been alive, would have wished [himself] so glorious an end' ('nam post multas hostium cedes sic viriliter eum constat peremptum, ut tam gloriosum superstis pater optasset interitum'). There was a custom in their milieu to sing of victories and brave deeds of their rulers. So, Priscus informs us as a witness (Prisc. *fr*. 8 D = 13, 1 B) that in a banquet at Attila's court two Huns stood before their overlord and performed songs composed in his honour (ᾄσματα πεποιημένα ἔλεγον νίκας αὐτοῦ [sc. Ἀττήλα] καὶ τὰς κατὰ πόλεμον ἄνδοντες ἀρετάς). During the funeral ceremony of Attila (Iord. *Get*. 256–257) the most picked Hun horsemen, when riding around a silk marquee in which his body was lying, commemorated his exploits by singing a dirge ('lectissimi equites… facta eius cantu funereio… referebant').

It is reported in the so-called 'Story about the Battle of the Goths with the Huns' preserved in the Old Scandinavian 'Hervararsaga' that mounted forces of the European Huns were organized in hundreds and thousands.[66] In other words, they continued to follow, undoubtedly after the Hsiung-nu model, the 'Asiatic decimal system' that was characterized by a division of troops into tactic units numbering

[64] Cf. Paul. Diac. *HR* XIV, 7: 'clamore perstrepere'; Paulin. Petric. *VM* VI, 93–94: 'Chunorum soni… atque minantum murmura et… fera'; Hier. *Comm. in Is*. III, 7: 'sed per feras gentes,… quarum… sermo terribilis est'.

[65] See Maenchen-Helfen 1973, 267–268.

[66] Wolfram 1993, 13.

10, 100, 1,000 and 10,000 men.[67] In this respect worthy of note is the fact that Sozomen's story about the invasion of Thrace by the Hun ruler Uldin in 408/409 refers to λοχαγοί in his troops (Sozom. IX, 5, 4). They were rather junior officers, each of whom is supposed to have been in command of a hundred soldiers.[68]

Now as to numbers of Hun troops. Some figures are cited by Zosimus and Philostorgius who both must have derived these from the lost history of Olympiodorus. The former, in particular, speaks of a small, 300–man, elite contingent composed of Huns in service of the Western Roman emperor Honorius in 408 (Zosim. V, 45, 6). Further, he lets us know that in 409 Honorius hired 10,000 Hun warriors to withstand the Visigoths in Italy (Ibid. V, 50, 1). According to Philostorgius, in 425 Aetius brought to Italy 60,000 (!) Hun mercenaries (Philostorg. XII, 14), however, this number is certainly grossly exaggerated and needs to be diminished approximately in 10 times.[69]

As more deserving confidence looks a report of the church historians about 10,000 men in the army of the Hun king Uptar, who fought the Burgundians in c. 430 (Socr. Schol. VII, 30, 6; Cassiod. *Hist*. XII, 4). On the contrary, one should consider as very exaggerated the strength of Attila's army in the course of his campaign in Gaul in 451 – 500,000 soldiers (Iord. *Get*. 182). In fact, it seems to have numbered roughly 100,000 fighters.[70] It is known that at the battle of Nedao in 454 the Huns and their allies lost about the 30,000 killed (Iord. *Get*. 262); but it was hardly the total annihilation, and by the start of the action they might have had in 1,5–2 times more warriors in their ranks.

It must be stated that the nature of power of the leader as a commander-in-chief among the Huns had been changing radically, developing since their invasion of Eastern Europe .onwards. At first, such was some clan elder ('primas') chosen occasionally from among other 'primates' (Amm. Marc. XXXI, 2, 7) as a provisional general ('rex': Iord. *Get*. 130; 248; 249; κρατῶν: Sozom. VI, 37, 4–5; ἄρχων: Prisc. *fr*. 8 D = 11, 2 B; Aster. *Hom.* 9) acting to be in charge of a raid or campaign. Next, we hear of the chief of a single tribe (φύλαρχος: Joan. Ant. *fr*. 187; ῥήξ: Olymp. *fr*. 18 D = 19 B; 'dux': Oros. VII, 37, 12; Paul. Diac. *HR* XII, 12; Land. Sag. XIII, 193; cf. Sidon. *Carm*. II, 241) and, afterwards, of the

[67] Khudiakov 1986, 49–50, 225. An additional evidence is adduced by the Byzantine historian of the first half of the 7th century, Theophylact Simocatta. Speaking of the Bulghars, i. e. representatives of the people descending in some part from the former Hun population of the Northern Pontic steppe area (see Artamonov 2002, 100–122; Golden 1990, 258; cf. Klyashtorny, Savinov 2005, 60–64), who were serving the Avars in the very late 6th century, he defines a strength of their contingent as 'ten hundreds': ἑκατοντάσι δέκα Βουλγάροις (Theophyl. Sim. VII, 4, 1). In turn, this clearly points at the Bulghar troops to have been organized in accordance with the same 'decimal system'.

[68] Harmatta 1952, 291.

[69] Thompson 1948, 49; 1999, 55.

[70] Cf. Bachrach 1994, 63–67.

supreme (often just nominal) chief of a tribal confederacy (ὁ τῶν ρηγῶν πρῶτος: Olymp. *fr*. 18 D = 19 B). Finally, the Huns were led in war by the absolute monarch like the noted Attila (βασιλεύς: Prisc. *fr*. 3 D = 9, 1 B; Evagr. I, 17; 'rex': see *LSNEE* I: 66–77).

By the way, the nature of Hun high leadership in war is well seen in the following instance. When the king Uptar (Octar) died in the course of his campaign against the Burgundians in the Rhine area (c. 430), his 10,000 soldiers, having suddenly found themselves without their commander-in-chief (ἀστρατήγητοι: Socr. Schol. VII, 30, 6 = sine duce: Cassiod. *Hist*. XII, 4), were so demoralized that were routed by the enemies numbering only 3,000 fighters.

In Attila's reign, some important military functions were performed by the most powerful representatives of the supreme Hun aristocracy called in our sources 'picked' (λογάδες: Prisc. *fr*. 7; 8 D = 11, 1; 2; 13, 1; 14 B) and 'royal companions' ('ministri regii': Iord. *Get*. 254). Two of them stood out against a background of the others – Onegesius and Edeco, the king's 'nearest companions' (ἐπιτήδειοι: Prisc. *fr*. 7; 8 D = 11, 1; 2 B) playing the main role in his military actions, who most likely were just those proclaimed as the 'generals having the greatest fame' in the Scythians' (i. e. Huns') midst (στρατηγοὶ μέγιστον παρὰ Σκύθαις ἔχοντες κλέος: Ibid. *fr*. 5 D = 9, 3 B). Some indirect data from Priscus (Ibid. *fr*. 8 D = 11, 2 B) would hint at the presence of personal bodyguards at the disposal of Onegesius and Edeco, and of Attila himself too (see also Iord. *Get*. 198; 256; cf. Malal. p. 359, 5: a reference to a certain σπαθάριος of Attila, who was in all likelihood a guard of his lord).

In addition to the λογάδες, Attila's closest retainers were as well two rulers of the subject Eastern Germanic peoples – Ardaric, the chief of the Gepids, and Valamer, the chief of the Ostrogoths. They both were very loyal to their sovereign and – the only from all other foreign princes – enjoyed his love and confidence (Iord. *Get*. 199–200). Their own forces constituted a considerable part of Attila's army,[71] and so their real influence upon his military policy had to be ponderable enough.

Some words should be said about technical services in the Hun forces. For capturing fortresses and fortified towns, according to literary evidence (Prisc. *fr*. 1b D = 6, 2 B; Iord. *Get*. 221; Paul. Diac. *HR* XIV, 9; Greg. Tur. *HF* II, 7), the Huns had in their army, at least under Attila, special units to attend to missile engines (μηχαναί, 'machinae', 'omnia genera tormentorum') and battering rams (κριοί, 'arietes'). Except for archers placed on the μηχαναί timbered platforms and shooting bows, under the shelter of willow-woven screens additionally covered over with rawhide and leather shrouds, at the defenders fighting from the walls (Prisc. *fr*. 1b D = 6, 2 B), crews of such siege devices appear to have been

[71] Bachrach 1994, 63–65.

recruited from foreign prisoners and deserters, not from the Huns themselves. These machines must have been built by Roman engineers in Hun service. The available testimonies of how the European Huns stormed enemy fortifications allow to assert that they had at their disposal practically all the means of the contemporary high-developed siegecraft and were able so to take even well-fortified strongholds.[72] According to the ancients' opinion, none of stone fortifications could stand up against Attila (Iord. *Get*. 210), speaking nothing of those not intended for opposing serious siege operations (Proc. *De aed*. IV, 5, 2–6).

The Hun forces included another auxiliary unit, viz. a stock of the heavy wagons (ἅμαξαι) carrying pontoons (σχεδίαι) to get over any water and marshy obstacles (Prisc. *fr*. 8 D = 11, 2 B). With their assistance there could be constructed a bridge (διάβασις) over a river to move the siege engines up to the fortifications to be assaulted (Ibid. *fr*. 1b D = 6, 2 B). To cross water streams there were used, in addition to the pontoons, boats made of single tree trunks (σκάφη μονόξυλα, μονόξυλα πλοῖα), served by special boatmen (πορθμεῖς: Ibid. *fr*. 8 D = 11, 2 B).

As a whole one may conclude that in Attila's days the special technical equipment of the Hun army was in keeping line with that of the Romans (cf. Veget. *ERM* III, 7; IV, 15; Amm. Marc. XXIII, 4, 8–13; Proc. *Bell*. V, 21, 6–13).[73]

Deserving attention is also such a method of Hun warfare as the employment of wagons to make a fortified camp by placing them as its fences ('septa castrorum, quam plaustris vallatum': Iord. *Get*. 210; 'plaustrorum munimenta': Paul. Diac. *HR* XIV, 7). Its erection was intended for finding shelter at night time and in case of the defeat in battle. Apparently, the surrounding wagons (generally called 'plaustra' and 'carpenta') were, on the one hand, the aforecited carriers of the pontoons, and, on the other hand, individual light carts–*kibitkas* ('carpenta': Amm. Marc. XXXI, 2, 10; cf. 'plaustra': Max. Tur. *Hom*. 94) serving normally as means of transportation to contain both the Hun warriors' families while wandering and various supplies and booty.

Without any doubt, the original idea of the military use of fortified camps belonged to nomadic peoples, in everyday life of which wagons played a very significant role. Such a kind of field fortification was able to protect from the enemies on open terrain, and it was intended not against infantry well trained to storm fortified objectives, but against cavalry. The history of the camp surrounded from every quarter by wagons and carts (English *wagon laager*, German *Wagenburg*, Czech *vozov hradba*) in Eastern and Central Europe goes back to the Scythian epoch and is traced up to the Late Medieval Ages.[74]

[72] See Tausend 1985/1986.

[73] See also Southern, Dixon 1996, 160–167; Tausend 1985/1986, 268–269.

[74] See in detail Golubovskii 1902; Pletneva 1964; Chernenko 1984, 64–66; Żygulski 1994; Golden 2002, 137–138.

It seems quite plausible that Huns surrounded the besieged towns with the complete ring of wagons and carts for the purpose of their total blockade: such a method of Hun poliorcetics appears to be implied by Jordanes' use of the participle 'circumvallans' in his report concerning the siege of the Pannonian city Basiana by the king Dintzic, Attila's son (Iord. *Get*. 272).

Hun warriors very willingly served the foreigners for pay, sometimes even both hostile sides at one and the same time (Amm. Marc. XXXI, 3, 3; Zosim. V, 37, 1; V, 45, 6; cf. V, 50, 1). But especially far-famed they were in service of the Romans, taking the part of allies hired for money, most probably as 'comitatenses' – soldiers of the imperial field army.[75] It is to be thought that exactly so was the status of the Hun soldiers participating in campaigns on the Roman side, which is hidden in Greek sources under the terms συμμαχικόν (Zosim. V, 26, 4), συμμαχία (Zosim. V, 50, 1; Synes. *Ep*. 78; Socr. Schol. VII, 23, 8), βοήθεια (Socr. Schol. VII, 43, 1), ὁμαιχμία (Prisc. *fr*. 8 D = 11, 2 B), ἔνσπονδοι (Proc. *Bell*. VIII, 5, 16) и μισθωτοί (Philostorg. XII, 14), and in Latin authors – 'auxilium' (Oros. VII, 37, 12; Prosp. *Chron*. 1310; Chron. Gall. p. 658, 112; 659, 587), 'auxiliantes' (Prosp. *Chron*. 1326; Isid. *HG* 24; Paul. Diac. *HR* XIII, 12; 13), 'auxiliares' (Chron. Gall. p. 652, 52; Prosp. *Chron*. 1335; Cassiod. *Chron*. 1232; Iord. *Get*. 176; idem. *Rom*. 358), 'auxiliari' (Iord. *Get*. 177), 'auxiliaris manus' (Hyd. *Chron*. 116), 'auxiliatores', 'socii' and 'foedus' (Paulin. Petric. *VM* VI, 219–221).

Worthy of note is that until the fall of the power of the Huns in South-Eastern Europe their rulers kept up active allied relations only with the Western Roman empire, the generals of which set their big hopes on Hun contingents acting in Gaul.[76] As regards Byzantium, the Huns concluded with it just the peace treaties which did not contain any points concerning military co-operation (Zosim. V, 22, 3; Prisc. *fr*. 2; 5; 6; 8; 13; 14 D = 6, 1; 9, 3; 10; 11, 2; 15, 3; 4 B). This fact must be explained by the fear of the Eastern Roman authorities, whose Danubian provinces were constantly under the threat of Hun invasions, to accept these barbarians for military service on the northern frontier. The main reason of that were so characteristic features of the Huns' behaviour as inconstancy and inclination to break the arrangements already signed, as well as their indefatigable passion for plunder.[77] Such apprehensions were quite just, indeed, because, as it follows from the testimonies of contemporaries (Sidon. *Carm*. VII, 248–250; Paulin. Petric. *VM* VI, 218–223; cf. Ibid. VI, 93–94; Salv. *GD* IV, 67; 68), the Hun mercenaries conducted themselves in Gaul, i. e. in the province of the Western empire allied with them, like in a conquered country, committing every possible excesses there.[78]

[75] Elton 1997, 89–97.

[76] See Salv. *GD* VII, 39: 'nos [sc. Romani] in Chunis spem ponere'.

[77] See, e. g. appropriate testimonials in Amm. Marc. XXXI, 2, 11 and Sidon. *Carm*. VII, 248–250.

[78] See also Maenchen-Helfen 1973, 257–258.

However, it appears that the Eastern Romans did not wish to employ the Huns as allies only in the northern, Balkan, provinces of their empire, where those would have been an additional factor of instability. Otherwise it was in the far, overseas possessions of the Byzantine empire. The matter is that a small elite troop composed of στρατιώται Οὐννίγαρδαι was disposed in the early 5th century in Lybia Pentapolis. Judging by its denomination, these warriors were Huns by origin (Suid. s. v. ᾽Οϊνγάρδαι: ὄνομα ἔθνους; Zonar. *Lex*. s. v. Οὐνιγάρδαι. ἐθνικόν). According to our only source, Synesius who saw them as a witness (Synes. *Ep*. 78; *Catast.* I, 2; *Catast.* II, 2), the Οὐννίγαρδαι were in service of the Roman military commander of the province and were provided with remounts, martial outfit and pay by the emperor himself. They fought in accordance with the warfare peculiarities characteristic of them – as mounted archers, and were praised as the best warriors of all the provincial forces. Often acting without assistance, these Huns were able to vanquish, despite their small number (just 40 men!), much more numerous enemies.[79] Worthy of note is the fact that the Οὐννίγαρδαι occupied an independent place in the composition of the provincial forces, being not mixed up with other units in one battle array (Synes. *Catast*. II, 2). It is interesting that approximately 120 years later the 'Huns' (= 'Massagetae', i. e. those recruited from the midst of various alien nomadic peoples of Central Asian origins, including the remainder of the former Hun population of South-Eastern Europe) who served in the army of Belisarius fighting against the Vandals in the same Northern Africa assumed their own formation separately from the rest of the Byzantine troops, like they had done so 'before' (πρότερον) (Proc. *Bell*. IV, 3, 7). In other words, it was necessary most likely from the point of view of the use by them of their specific tactical methods.[80]

Seemingly, the Hun sovereigns tried to control the process of recruiting mercenaries from their own soldiery. And what is more, having become a sole ruler of the Huns, Attila, planning to be on the wide offensive against both the Roman empires, prohibited his subjects to fight against himself at all (Prisc. *fr*. 8 D = 11, 2 B).[81] This situation changed only after the battle at Nedao in 454. Since then, after the break-down of the state created by Attila, an initiative in hiring Hun mercenaries was taken up by the Byzantine authorities (Iord. *Get*. 265—266),[82] and very soon in their service there appeared even Hun-birth officers like a certain Chelchal (Prisc. *fr*. 39 D = 49 B).

[79] See Roques 1987, 68, 77, 165, 236, 237, 240, 244, 245, 247–250, 256, 262, 264, 270, 282, 289–292; Maenchen-Helfen 1973, 255; Elton 1997, 92–95, 107.

[80] Darkó 1935, 468.

[81] Täckholm 1969, 270.

[82] Sinor 1982, 487–488.

It is to be underlined that the Huns influenced very deeply, by their introduction into European fighting practice of the powerful and long-range bows first and foremost, both offensive armament and tactics not only of the peoples subject to them, but also – through battling against imperial armies and providing them with mercenary forces from their own midst – of the Late Roman and Early Byzantine military.[83]

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[83] Darkó 1935, 463–469; 1948, 87–89; Bivar 1972, 281–284; Coulston 1985, 243–244; 1986, 70; Bishop, Coulston 1993, 195, 205.

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Abstract

The paper deals with the art of warfare of the Huns, who invaded Southeast Europe in the last third of the 4th century A.D. and dominated there through the third quarter of the 5th century. It is described on the basis of all the available Greek and Latin written sources. Matters of the author's consideration are arms and armour, horse equipment, armed forces, strategy and tactics, siegecraft and the structure of military organization. Some part of the paper contains critics of R. P. Lindner's theory about the "dismounting" of the majority of Hun cavalry troops at least by the time of the great ruler Attila.

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